"When you've worked in an area for some time, you get known and then you get trusted. This credibility extends beyond the young people you've actually worked with to the others on their networks; young people you've never met ... This only happens because you're there, because you've been there."

This research, undertaken by a team from the Universities of Durham, Lincoln and Luton, addresses the question of the role of detached and outreach youth work in the post-1997 policy environment of outcome-driven youth initiatives, and in particular, how mainstream detached and outreach youth work might articulate with the Connexions Service to facilitate the involvement of socially excluded young people in forms of education, training and employment which are both relevant and accessible.

The research aims to explore the nature and range of street-based youth work with socially excluded young people in England and Wales, to identify the effectiveness of agency strategies and practice interventions, and to establish how street-based youth work can best contribute to the Connexions Service and its key partnerships.

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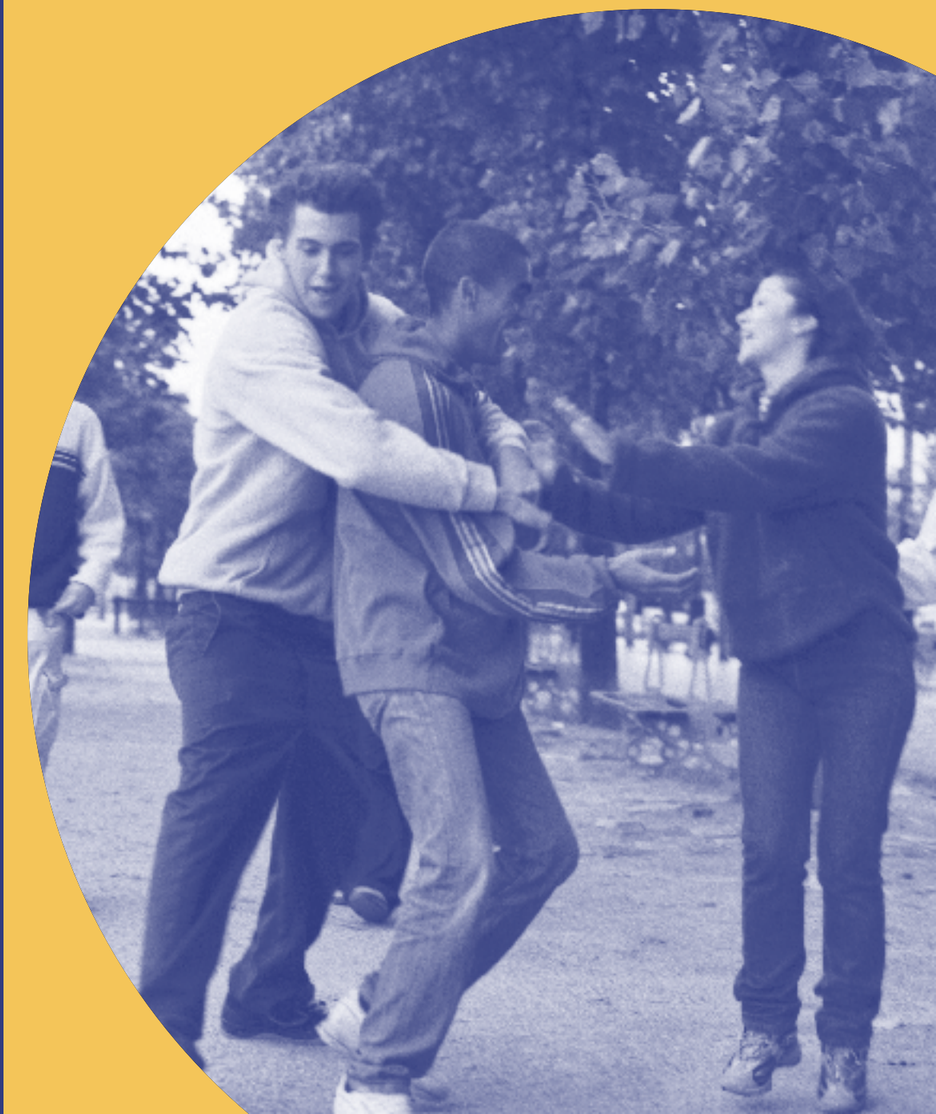
The National Youth Agency

Reaching socially excluded young people – A national study of street-based youth work

David Crimmens, Fiona Factor, Tony Jeffs, John Pitts, Carole Pugh, Jean Spence and Penelope Turner.

Reaching socially excluded young people

A national study of street-based youth work



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Any views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and contributors and not necessarily of The National Youth Agency.

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The National Youth Agency

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When you've worked in an area for some time, you get known and then you get trusted. This credibility extends beyond the young people you've actually worked with to the others on their networks, young people you've never even met. Sometimes they'll introduce you to a mate who has got a problem and they'll say 'you can tell her, she's alright'. Sometimes you will know a young person for a long time, years sometimes, and all they'll do is scowl or nod or smile and then, one day, when they need to, or when they're ready, it all comes out – mum, dad, school, work, drink, drugs, boyfriends … And suddenly there's a lot of work to be done. This only happens because you're there, because you've been there.

Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without the cooperation of literally hundreds of young people, youth workers and others associated with street-based youth work projects. They answered our questions, completed our questionnaires, took us out onto the streets with them and spent a great deal of time discussing the important issues with us. Promises of anonymity prevent us from naming these people but we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to them all. We hope that after reading this report they will feel that the help and support they offered us was worthwhile.

We would also like to record our thanks to the members of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Advisory Panel whose thoughtful discussion of the issues and advice have been an important source of support for the research team. They were: Bob Coles, Alison Skinner, Alan France, Sheena Horner-Knight, Maggie Jones, Charlie Lloyd and Tom Wylie.

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1 The background to the study

7.00 p.m. and the sun is still shining after a bright, warm day. Two detached youth workers, one male and one female, meet at the converted shop which serves as the project base. After reading the recordings from the previous evening, they have a brief preparatory discussion before setting off to walk their 'patch' which comprises two electoral wards, twice a week. Both workers wear ID badges and one carries the project rucksack containing leaflets, a mobile phone and project recording sheets. Tonight, one of their aims is to gather recruits for a new motorbike project. They are looking particularly for some local young people who have been riding mopeds illegally. Almost immediately they stop to talk to five young men they know well. One wants to talk about his forthcoming court case and another says he has been banned from a local youth club. Having discussed these matters, the workers mention the motorbike project. Moving on, the workers come across three young men they don't know. They introduce themselves and offer leaflets about the services provided by the project. They do the same when they encounter two young women who are unknown to them. The young women seem very interested and one asks twice if the help offered by the project is confidential. The workers then call into a Community Education Centre to ask about the possibility of work experience there for a young man known to the project. Outside the centre they find three of the boys who have been riding mopeds illegally and talk to them about bikes, the risks involved in riding them and the bike project. By a local supermarket the workers start a conversation with a group of 10 and 11-year-olds. They tell them about a forthcoming holiday play scheme and other leisure opportunities for the age group in the area. After three hours, the workers finish their session. They complete their contact sheets, recording time spent with whom, topics discussed, issues raised and action which needs to be taken. Tonight they have made contact with 21 young men and six young women.

This study explores the contribution of detached and outreach youth work to the involvement of socially excluded young people in relevant and accessible education, training and employment in England and Wales. In particular it considers how detached and outreach youth work might articulate with the Connexions initiative.

Brief history of detached and outreach youth work in the UK

Outreach work with young people has its origins in the activities of nineteenth century philanthropic organisations which attempted to draw young people into a particular service or activity, to deliver a particular message to them, or to exert influence upon them *(Kaufman, 2001)*. This work was concerned with the health and moral development of lower class children and young people and also with 'child rescue' *(Platt, 1969; Wagner, 1979)*. As such, it provides an example of the district visiting traditions of early social work *(Humphries, 1995; Spence, 2003)*.

Detached youth work endeavours to provide a broad-based 'social education', normally at the behest of, and largely in a form determined by, young people on their own territory. Modern UK detached youth work emerged in the wake of the Albemarle Report on the Youth Service in England and Wales *(Ministry of Education, 1960)*. Underlying Albemarle was a notion that if young people were to become active, discerning and responsible citizens of a complex, modern society, the state should provide post-school

'social education', delivered by trained professionals within a non-coercive relationship *(Davies and Gibson, 1967)*. Albemarle also recognised that if a universal 'social education' service was to be achieved, 'experimental and pioneering' approaches would be required to reach the 'unattached'; a group perceived to be 'at risk' in a variety of ways *(Fyvel, 1961; Morse, 1965)*. In consequence, Albemarle stimulated a broad range of innovative interventions with young people that eluded easy academic or bureaucratic categorisation *(Cox and Cox, 1977; Collins and Hoggarth, c1975; Goetschius and Tash, 1967; Ince, c.1971; Jeffs, 1979; Davies, 1999a)*. Elements of the US 'Street Gang Work' model *(Spergel, 1966)* were incorporated into some UK practice in the 1960s and early 1970s, most notably in the Wincroft Youth Project which commenced in 1964 and targeted young people involved in offending and their peers. Its 'correctional' objectives notwithstanding, Wincroft operated in accordance with the essentially 'user-led' values of mainstream detached youth work *(Smith et al, 1972; Pitts, 1988)*.

In the early 1970s, a growing awareness of inner-city poverty spawned the 'UK Poverty Programme'. The youth work developed in this context was grounded in community work initiatives, utilising neighbourhood-based detached and outreach methods to develop user-led services *(Edginton, 1979; Leissner, 1969; Loney, 1983)*. By the 1980s, this endeavour was evolving into targeted, 'user-led', 'rights-based' interventions with 'oppressed' young people, rooted in an emergent politics of identity *(Begum, 1995; Carpenter and Young, 1986; Jamdagni, 1980; Parmar, 1988; Spence, 1989; Trenchard and Warren, 1985)*. The shift away from universalism towards targeting and diversification of youth work provision was given legitimacy and added impetus by the Thompson Report *(DES, 1983)*.

Meanwhile, cutbacks in Government spending, which began in the mid 1970s, becoming particularly acute as the 1980s progressed, was forcing voluntary and statutory youth serving organisations to re-organise and, in many cases, reduce the scope of their services. One consequence of this was that, increasingly full-time professional youth workers were assuming a managerial role *(Spence, 1996)* while, to a large extent, face-to-face work with young people became the preserve of part-time workers and volunteers. This signalled a retreat from the professionalisation of youth work which had been a characteristic of the post-Albemarle years.

However, this contraction of the Youth Service was paralleled by expansion in other public service areas relevant to young people, two of the most notable being youth justice and community safety *(Factor and Pitts, 2001)*. In the mid-1980s the Home Office embarked upon a crime reduction strategy at the heart of which lay what it described as 'inter-agency co-operation' *(Marlow and Pitts, 1998)*. Early crime reduction partnerships like the Five Towns Initiative (1986), the Safer Cities Programme (1988) and specialist youth projects developed in consultation with the semi-independent organisation Crime Concern (1988) created many new opportunities for intervention with young people *(Blagg et al, 1988)*. With the publication of the Morgan Report (1991), 'community safety' came of age. The report proposed the creation of local multi-agency partnerships that would pay particular attention to the development of measures designed to reduce youth offending.

The involvement of street-based youth work and community safety gained impetus in the

early 1990s when the DfEE funded 28 English local authorities to create 60 experimental youth crime reduction projects, the bulk of which operated in high crime neighbourhoods, utilising outreach/detached work methods. These projects successfully targeted young people at serious risk of offending who were not involved with other criminal justice and/or social welfare agencies. However, the evaluators observed that a substantial minority of projects appeared reluctant to evaluate their work simply in terms of the specific crime-reduction targets, suggesting a tension between the target-led goals of the projects and the user-led ethos of detached and outreach youth work *(France and Wiles, 1996)*.

The 1990s also saw the emergence of new kinds of outreach/detached work funded from SRBs or other non-traditional sources, and delivered in a range of settings *(Coles, 2000; Mizen, 2003)*. This work, usually time-limited, problem-oriented and target-led, was concerned, for example, with youth crime prevention, drugs, HIV, youth homelessness, truancy and school exclusion. It employed workers from health, welfare, urban re-generation and criminal justice agencies, often adopting case-work rather than group-work methods and focusing upon externally specified outcomes. As such it adopted a different emphasis and a different ethos from the user-led, educational approaches developed within mainstream youth work *(Jeffs and Smith, 2002; Firmstone, 1998)*.

New Labour; new youth policy

The election of a Labour Government in 1997 witnessed an attempt to develop a coherent youth policy through the appointment of a Minister for Youth, the establishment of a dedicated Cabinet Committee for Young People and an Inter-Departmental Children and Young People's Unit in 2001. Since 1997, the capacity of young people to make a successful transition to a self-sufficient adulthood and their involvement in crime and disorder have become major areas of governmental intervention in the UK *(Coles, 2000; Mizen, 2003)* as the following list of initiatives suggests:

- **Drug abuse** — Tackling Drugs Together/Drug Action Teams
- **HIV/AIDS** — DoH Sexual Health Initiative
- **Teenage pregnancy** — Social Exclusion Unit
- **Youth homelessness** — Social Exclusion Unit Youth, Homelessness Action Partnerships
- **Leaving care** — DoH Quality Protects Initiative
- **Truancy/school exclusion** — New Start, Crime and Disorder Act, 1998.
- **Youth crime/justice** — On Track, Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Youth Offending Teams, Youth Inclusion Programmes, SPASH, ISSPs, PAYP, 'Respect and Responsibility' White Paper 2003

- **Community safety** Area Community Safety Partnerships
- **Urban renewal** Excellence in Cities, New Deal for Communities, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
- **Challenging behaviour** DfEE Challenging Behaviour Initiative
- **Adult education** Lifelong Learning
- **Citizenship** National Curriculum
- **Racial conflict** CRE, Getting Results
- **Vocational training and employment** New Deal, Learning and Skills Councils, Connexions, Learning Gateways, Disapplication of the National Curriculum.

The two initiatives which will have the greatest impact upon detached and outreach youth work are the reforms of the youth justice system and community safety introduced from 1998 *(Marlow and Pitts, 1998; Pitts, 2003)* and the establishment of the Connexions Service in 2000. These initiatives have spawned new administrative structures and a plethora of programmes targeting the risk factors associated with youth crime and social exclusion. Both have accorded a key role to detached and outreach youth work.

These new Government initiatives have created a quasi-market wherein potential providers have been required to tender for time-limited contracts to deliver particular functions or undertake particular tasks. In the light of the multi-faceted nature of the problems to be addressed by their new programmes, the Labour Government identified multi-agency partnerships as the vehicle for 'delivery'. Because interventions of this breadth are vulnerable to 'mission drift', the Government has, therefore, been keen to ensure that intervention is tightly targeted, closely monitored and 'micro-managed' to prevent the subversion of policy objectives.

The impact of these changes on local authority Youth Services

Although legislation enabling the creation of a national Youth Service was introduced in 1939, and its existence was enshrined in the Education Act of 1944, it was the Albemarle Report (1960) which created a national structure for the Youth Service by instituting partnership relationships and systems for financial support and liaison between local authorities and the voluntary sector. A significant injection of resources led to the construction of a network of local authority 'youth centres' augmented by 'experimental' detached youth work projects *(Davies, 1999)*. Professionalisation was promoted with the establishment of a National College running professional training programmes for 'youth leaders' at Leicester. As we have noted, Albemarle's vision of a 'universal' Youth Service

was never fully realised and by the late 1990s, after two decades of cutbacks, the Youth Service was beginning to fragment. Local government was reorganising in response to changed governmental priorities and elements of the Youth Service and its personnel were being redeployed into newly established children and young people's and 'lifelong learning' directorates, area regeneration programmes, community safety initiatives or youth justice.

At the turn of the 21st century, the Connexions Service was launched, with budgets often dwarfing those of the local authority Youth Service. In 2000-01, for example, the actual amounts spent on the Youth Service nationally totalled an estimated £256,410,000, *(NYA, 2002)* whereas the Connexions budget for 2003-2004 is £457,000,000. Inevitably concerns were raised for youth workers that Connexions would eventually incorporate the Youth Service. These concerns have been exacerbated by the publication of Transforming Youth Work *(DfEE, 2000)* which makes increased Youth Service funding contingent upon collaboration with, and the adoption of, many of the goals of Connexions *(DfEE, 2000; DfES, 2002)*.

Connexions

Connexions is designed to be a universal service providing 'advice, guidance, support and personal development opportunities for all 13 to 19-year-olds' *(DfEE, 2000)*. However, the Connexions Strategy maintains a particular focus upon the 9 per cent of young people in the age-range not in education, training or work, and a further 20 to 25 per cent 'who experience significant obstacles and setbacks' (ibid). It is hoped that by maintaining contact and 'tracking' these latter groups of young people through their teenage years, Connexions can help to provide 'a ladder out of social exclusion breaking the cycle of non-participation and underachievement' (ibid).

Connexions comprises four main elements:

1. The Connexions Strategy aims to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to learn the skills they need to make a success of their adult lives and that disadvantaged young people are supported to engage in the necessary learning. The strategy has four components:
    a. the development of a more flexible secondary curriculum;
    b. the provision of high quality sixth form education, further education and work-based learning;
    c. financial support for those in learning; and
    d. outreach, information, support and guidance.

2. Connexions Partnerships are regional bodies responsible for the realisation of the Connexions Strategy through planning, financial management and decision making. Membership of the Partnership Board includes CEOs or local authority councillors, directors or chairs of Careers Services and Learning Skills Councils, employers, and senior representatives from the Health Authority, Police, Probation, Youth Justice, the voluntary sector, FE colleges and training providers. Partnerships employ a chief executive.

There are three possible partnership models:

a. direct delivery, where the partnership has its own resources and structures;
b. sub-contracting, involving the formation of a new company, (often where careers companies already have a contract); and
c. lead body arrangements, which is not favoured by the Connexions Service National Unit, as it lacks the necessary amount of control and accountability *(Hill, 2001)*.

3. Local Connexions Management Committees are based upon what were previously Careers Service areas and are responsible for raising awareness of Connexions locally. Local Management Committees are required to 'organise delivery of accessible services, through schools, colleges, youth centres and "shop front offices". It is envisaged that street-based youth workers will collaborate with, or be seconded to, Connexions' Local Management Committees *(DfEE, 2000)*. Committees, which have limited funds to spend on augmenting existing services or plugging gaps in provision, are usually chaired by a local authority CEO or another senior local figure and their membership characteristically includes line managers and frontline staff from the agencies and organisations represented on the Partnership Board, plus some young people in the Connexions age range.

4. Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) are recruited from a range of professional backgrounds but were initially drawn predominately from the Careers and Youth Services. PAs may be generalists or specialists who concentrate on particular groups, issues or problems. While many are located in what were Careers Service offices, others may be placed in schools, Youth Offending Teams, Young Offender Institutions and other relevant settings. There is an expectation that Connexions PAs will work closely with the Youth Service. The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) identified four possible models for this relationship:

    a. youth workers could become PAs in their own professional setting;
    b. youth workers could become PAs in a multi-agency Connexions team;
    c. PAs could be placed in existing Youth Service settings; and
    d. PAs could deliver specialist support alongside youth workers.

    (DfES, 2002)

Clearly, there is considerable scope here for regional and local variation and this will shape the model of service development and service delivery adopted locally, which will, in turn, shape the contribution of, and roles to be played by, local providers. Such regional and local variation, compounded by organisational complexity, a certain vagueness about goals and priorities in the materials generated centrally and, occasionally, poor or contradictory communication at local level, appears to have produced considerable uncertainty about what, precisely, Connexions is and what it can do, not least, as our research suggests, amongst those who will be expected to deliver it.

The Connexions Service does not operate in Wales, where an equivalent strategy, outlined in *Extending Entitlement (National Assembly for Wales, 2000)*, aims to achieve 'better

outcomes for young people' in the areas of education, training and employment 'by improving the support provided by existing services'. Like Connexions it has the stated aim of establishing a 'universal entitlement to quality services' but, unlike Connexions, it does not maintain a particular focus on those deemed to be most at risk.

Support for young people is likely to be most effective where it is part of a broad network, open to all young people, with opportunities to respond to problems as early as possible … support for young people in Wales should be structured around an entitlement for all young people to a range of services in the language of their choice, designed to promote their attainment and development as individuals *(ibid, 2000, p.6)*.

In Wales, statutory and voluntary sector agencies are encouraged, rather than required, to work closely together, and the onus is upon 'keeping in touch' with young people rather than 'tracking' them, as is the case with Connexions. It is intended that continuing career development and 'lifelong learning' will be supported by an all age careers guidance service.

The role of detached and outreach youth work

Clearly, reaching those young people who are hardest to reach will be central to an effective assault upon social exclusion and this is where the contribution of detached and outreach youth work is seen to lie by both academic commentators and policy makers. In their report on the life chances of the young people on a run-down, isolated, housing estate, *Johnston et al (2000)* argue that detached and outreach youth work would be central to working with the kinds of young people that New Labour youth strategies, outlined above, were intended to reach. *Britton et al (2002)* echo this view but, like *France and Wiles (1996)* and *Johnston et al* they point to the tensions between the needs-led, client-centred, approach of traditional youth work and new approaches geared to the more restrictive goals of insertion in education and training or the reduction or elimination of particular behaviours *(Pitts, 2001)*. As *Johnston et al* observe:

> ... the adoption of an advocacy role based on trust and confidentiality may not sit comfortably with the legal and formal demands made by statutory and non-statutory partners such as the police, social services and the Connexions agency (2000, p.25).

The research reported here addresses this question of the role of detached and outreach youth work in the post-1997 policy environment of outcome-driven youth initiatives and, in particular, how mainstream detached and outreach youth work might articulate with the Connexions Service to facilitate the involvement of socially excluded young people in forms of education, training and employment which are both relevant and accessible.

The research

The research was undertaken by a team from the universities of Durham, Lincoln and Luton between November 2001 and July 2003. This was a period when both policy and service development were changing at an unprecedented pace. The first 12 Connexions partnerships were 'rolled-out' in April 2001 and 46 of the 47 partnerships were established by October 2002 when much of the field work had been completed.

As a result, only a minority of the youth workers who responded to the initial survey and subsequent interviews had had direct experience of working with the new service. Moreover, Transforming Youth Work *(DfES, 2002)* which, like Connexions, appears destined to have a profound impact upon the field had not then been published.

Undertaking practice and policy-oriented research in such a fast-changing environment has the advantage of offering important insights into the impact of these changes. The potential disadvantage is that it may have less relevance to the reconfigured field. Consequently, a dialogue has been maintained with members of the research advisory group and key informants from the projects studied throughout, to ensure that the findings speak to the current realities of policy and practice.

Defining detached and outreach youth work has long proved problematic because of the difficulty of making hard and fast distinctions between detached, outreach, 'drop-in', 'vehicle-based' and 'project' work *(Davies, 2001)*. Recently, this task has become even more difficult because of the pace of change. Yet, because detached and outreach youth work has become a key point of delivery for social and criminal justice policy, and time-limited, 'outcome' or 'target-driven' work has challenged mainstream 'user-led approaches' such a redefinition appeared necessary.

At the outset, in order to demarcate as clearly as possible the phenomenon to be investigated, the research team adopted the following working definitions of detached and outreach youth work:

Outreach work is undertaken by workers who are either taking particular types of information or a particular service to young people who are not using existing building-based provision. Outreach work may also aim to draw certain identified groups or individuals, such as young people not using any youth facilities, young opiate users or prolific young offenders, into building-based services in which more tightly structured work can take place.

Detached work endeavours to provide a broad-based, open-ended, social education in which the problems and issues to be dealt with, and the manner in which they are dealt with, emerges from a dialogue between the young person and the youth worker. The work usually takes place on the street or in other public or commercial leisure facilities. Detached youth workers may target individuals, groups, youth networks, adult networks or local administrative or political structures in an attempt to achieve beneficial change for young people.

Perhaps inevitably such 'ideal types' proved to be rare in practice. So while recognising that the work described here occurs not only on the street but also in schools and other public places, throughout the rest of this report the term 'street-based youth work' has been adopted to encompass the broad range of approaches pursued under the headings of detached and outreach work.

The research aims

The research sought to:

- explore the nature, range and geographical spread of street-based youth work with socially excluded young people in England and Wales;
- identify the effectiveness of agency strategies and practice interventions in developing significant and sustainable educational, training and vocational opportunities; and
- establish how street-based youth work can best contribute to and articulate with the Connexions Service and the 'key agencies' that constitute Connexions Partnerships.

Research methodology

The researchers utilised a six-stage methodology:

Stage 1: Local authority principal youth officers and senior representatives from YOTs, national voluntary sector organisations, careers companies and Connexions Partnerships in England and Wales were asked to provide information on detached and outreach projects for which they were responsible and about which they had information. This yielded information on 1,547 projects.

Stage 2: The 1,547 projects identified were surveyed and respondents were asked to provide information about their size, funding, organisational structure, scope, focus and staffing. Six hundred and ninety-three questionnaires were returned (45 per cent) of which 9 per cent were invalid because the organisation was not undertaking street-based youth work, leaving 564 who did. Mapping the 564 projects revealed an uneven national distribution. As we note in Chapter 2, although this could be due to non-reporting, other studies have noted a similaly uneven distribution of youth provision *(NYA, 2001a; 2001b)*.

Stage 3: Because of time and resource restraints, it had been decided at the outset that a representative sample of 30 projects would be selected from those responding to the Stage 2 survey for further research. The criteria for selection included size, funding, organisational structure, scope, focus, staffing and geographical location, and whether the project had provided sufficient additional information, such as annual reports and evidence of recent evaluations of effectiveness, for the research team to assess whether it appeared to be achieving its objectives. This latter criterion was deemed to be important since the research team was concerned to discover how and why projects succeeded rather than how and why they failed. In the event, the majority of the 564 projects surveyed appeared to be achieving their objectives and so, to a considerable extent, the selection of projects was determined by the other criteria listed. In order to achieve as representative a sample as possible, we eventually selected 31 projects rather than the intended 30 and conducted telephone interviews with an experienced member of staff in each of them in order to gain a better understanding of their perspectives on, and concerns about, contemporary developments in the field.

The data generated in Stages 2 and 3 were then compared with data extracted from a survey of 109 Principal Youth Officers and 77 detached youth work projects undertaken by the De Montfort University Centre for Social Action in 1999 *(Skinner, 1999)*.

Stage 4: Involved visits to 11 of the 31 projects selected for telephone interview, which the team assessed as being representative of current work in the field. The 11 included large and small projects, projects in urban and rural settings, those targeting high-risk young people and those with a generic social-educational brief. Two site visits were undertaken to each project during which researchers:

- attended team meetings;
- accompanied youth workers on the 'street';
- administered a brief questionnaire to young people encountered on street-work sessions;
- administered a 'ten-point social exclusion inventory' (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 1), which focused upon potential problem areas, such as accommodation, family relationships, drug use, and crime, to establish the nature and intensity of the problems addressed by projects and to plot the progress of randomly selected young service users over time; and
- interviewed professionals in other local agencies.

Stage 5: Street-based youth workers from these 11 projects attended a two-day research workshop that explored strategies and skills for contacting and working with young people not in education, employment or training and identified what constituted good street-work practice.

Stage 6: Consisted of follow-up telephone calls to the 31 projects selected for telephone interview eight to ten months after the original interview to ascertain whether they were still engaged in street-based youth work and whether there had been any significant changes to their work.

The structure of the report

The remainder of this report is divided into two main sections. Chapters 2 to 4 focus upon the findings of the study and Chapters 5 to 8 deal with the major issues arising from the findings of the study. Chapter 2 reports the findings of the national survey. Chapter 3 focuses upon the nature of everyday, face-to-face work with young people, illustrating how the workers spend their time and how the work is managed. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of those young people targeted by street-based youth work and the impact of the work upon their lives. Chapter 5 analyses the reconfigured field of street-based youth work, identifying its key characteristics and the issues raised by the new demands placed upon it. Chapter 6 focuses upon the financial, logistical and organisational factors that make street-based youth work sustainable in an uncertain financial environment. Chapter 7 considers the impact of monitoring and evaluation on the work. Chapter 8 deals with the contribution of street-based youth work to the involvement of socially excluded young people in education, training and employment and its relationship with the Connexions Service. Chapter 9 presents the conclusions drawn from the research and their implications for policy and practice.

2 The national picture

Alison lives with her mother and disabled sister in an isolated rural village with few transport links and little provision for young people. She is one of a fairly large group of young men and women contacted by workers who use a transit van to make a weekly visit to the village. When a drugs and alcohol worker joined the project, she gradually established a relationship with Alison who was then aged 14. Alison revealed to the worker that not only was she excluded from school, she was also involved in drug taking and was troubled about her sexual health. Alison needed a lot of individual attention but the worker could only suggest that in order to talk privately, they move to the other side of the van, slightly apart from the main group. Alison's family was already known to the NSPCC. Because the project was scheduled to move on to another area, with Alison's permission, the worker contacted the NSPCC who invited her to music and drama workshops in a local town. A year later, the NSPCC contacted the project worker on behalf of Alison who was asking for help with her drug taking. Contact was renewed and the worker was able to put Alison in contact with a specialist agency which helped her to cut down on her drug use.

The research strategy

The research strategy aimed to collect relevant data about projects from five sources in England and Wales: principal youth officers, YOTs, national voluntary sector organisations, careers companies and Connexions Partnerships. In order to check the validity of this strategy, the information derived was compared with that from six pilot areas, chosen because members of the research team had extensive local knowledge of provision in these areas. In these pilot areas, there was a strong correspondence between the results generated by the research strategy and the research team's local knowledge. This suggests that the five-fold 'triangulation' represented a robust investigative strategy.

Proliferation and diversification

The national survey, designed to establish the numbers and types of projects using street-based youth work methods, was undertaken between January and June 2002. Of 1,547 projects initially identified, 564 returned questionnaires.

The questionnaire returns suggest a five-fold increase in street-based youth work since a similar exercise was undertaken by Marks in 1976 *(Marks, 1976)*. If non-respondents were to be included in the calculation, the increase would appear to be 15-fold. However, as our research suggests, many street work projects are short-lived, due to funding shortfalls and staff retention problems. It is, therefore, likely that a substantial number of these non-responding projects had either ceased to exist or had ceased working as street-based youth work projects.

It is likely that much of this increase in provision has taken place recently, since almost 50 per cent of the 564 projects have been in existence for three years or less and only 24 for over 15 years. This recent expansion has brought many non-traditional service providers into the field, resulting in changes in both the targets and the ethos of the work.

Contemporary street-based youth work is no longer the exclusive domain of professional youth workers. It is also undertaken by police officers, nurses, environmentalists, drugs education workers, housing resettlement workers and Connexions PAs. As we observed in Chapter 1, it appears that today, much of the funding of street-based youth work reflects governmental concerns with the control of crime and disorder, social exclusion and education, training and employment *(Factor and Pitts, 2001)*.

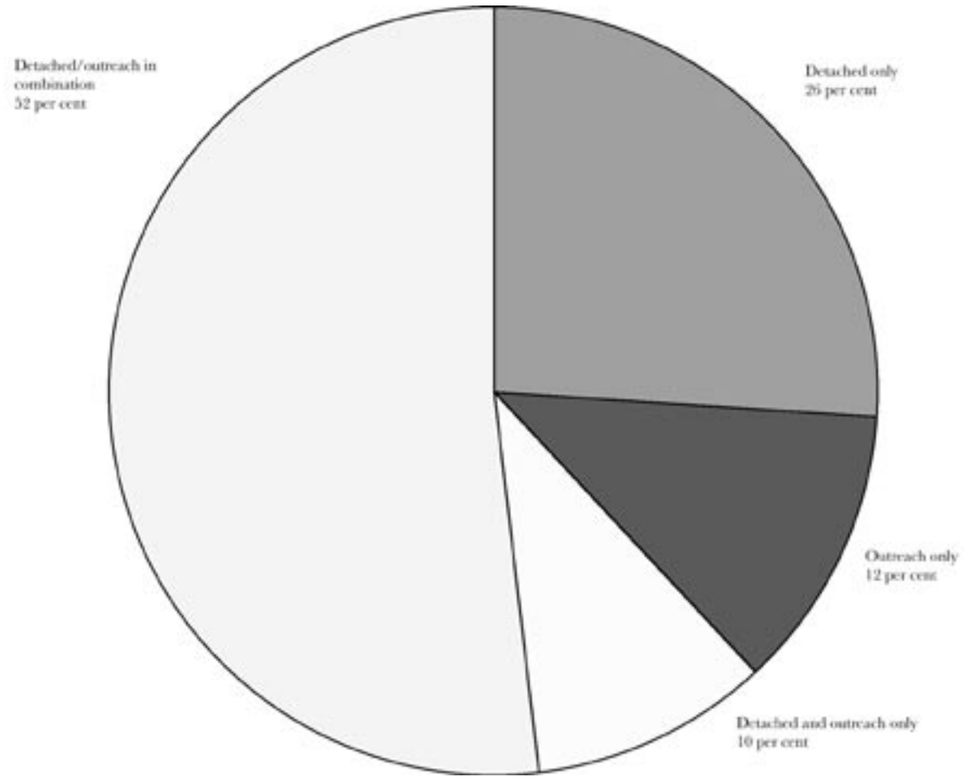
To measure recent shifts in the targeting of street-based youth work, data from projects involved in the Stage 1 survey were compared with data gathered on 77 detached projects by Alison Skinner in 1999 (see Table 2.1). The comparison suggests a movement away from 'universal', area-based, work targeting a range of young people in an identified geographical area, to a mixture of area- and issues-based work which targets particular problems or specific groups or individuals. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5.

	Skinner (1999)	**Current Research (2002)**
Area	62.3 per cent	37 per cent
Issues	2.6 per cent	4.1 per cent
Area and Issue	19.5 per cent	57.2 per cent
Other	15.6 per cent	1.4 per cent

Working methods

Relatively few of the projects surveyed utilised only detached or outreach youth work

Figure 2.1 Working methods



as defined in Chapter 1. Seventy-six per cent of the 564 projects surveyed were doing detached work and 61 per cent outreach work. However, only 26 per cent undertook detached work only and only 12 per cent outreach work only. Forty-five per cent of projects were also involved in building-based work and 20 per cent were engaged in 'other' forms of work, including individual casework, work in schools, 'drop-in advice', 'vehicle-based work', 'project work', group work and counselling.

Projects undertaking only detached work are more frequently provided by the local authority Youth Service. They tend to be small and locality-based, providing an average of 50 staff hours per week. Much of their work appears to focus on young people who lack access to other youth provision. Projects undertaking only outreach work tend to be run by non-governmental organisations. These are 'newer' and more likely to have insecure funding. They tend to work with small numbers of higher need/risk young people who are experiencing difficulties in the areas of housing, physical and mental health, poverty, crime, leaving care and education, training or employment. With the advent of multi-agency working, in which 74 per cent of respondents were engaged, both the diversity and complexity of the tasks to be accomplished by street-based youth work have escalated.

Geographical distribution

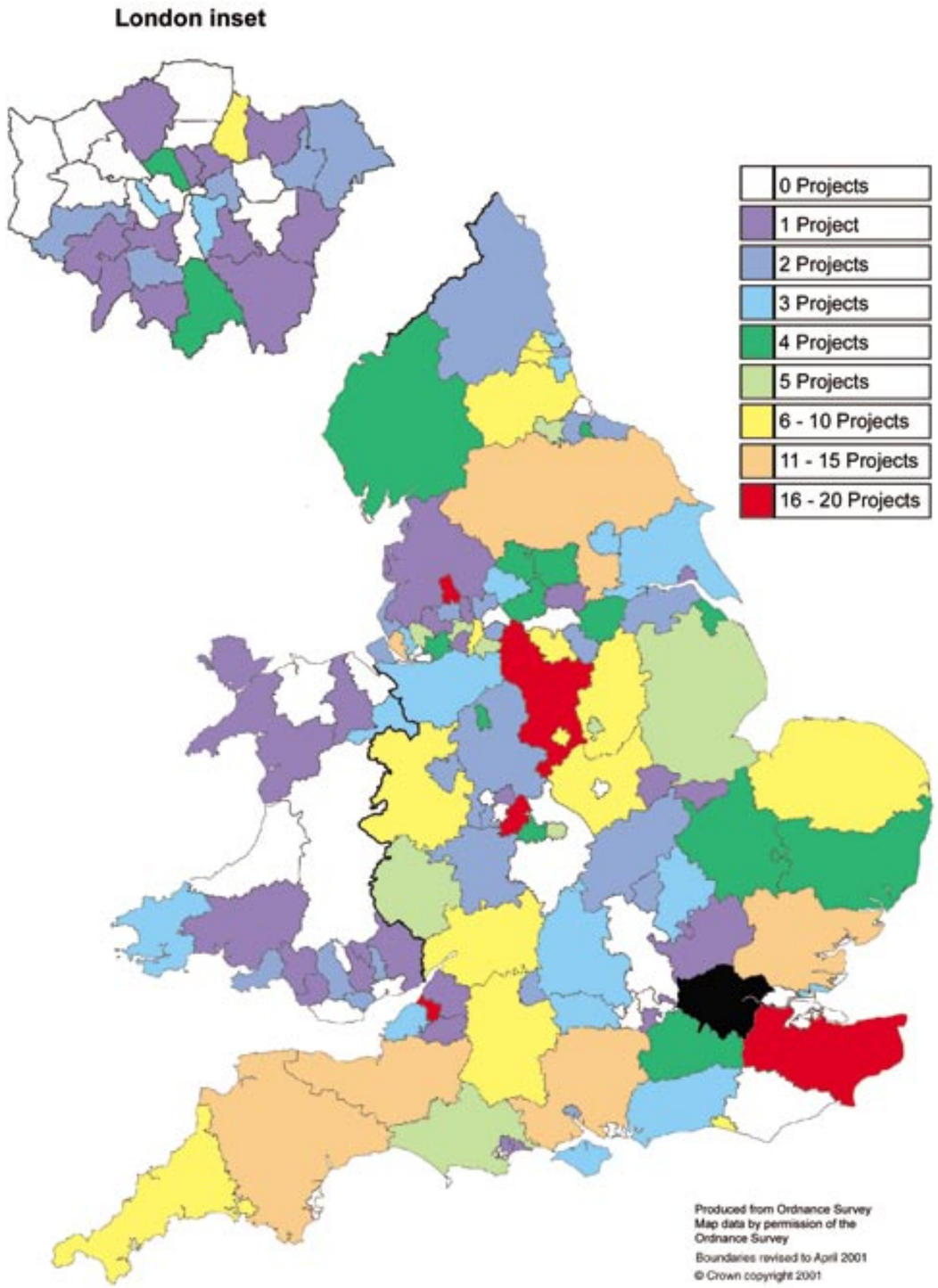
Survey responses suggested an uneven geographical distribution of street-based youth work and this was echoed in the distribution of non-respondents. Some local authority areas, like Bristol and Kent, reported 20 or more projects while others appeared to have none. For the Connexions age group (13 to 19 years), provision ranged from one street-based youth work project per 3,030 young people in Devon and Cornwall to one per 55,642 young people in Northamptonshire. The highest concentration of projects in England is in the South West (17 per cent), with London having the second lowest concentration (8.2 per cent) which represents only 1.4 projects per London borough. The East of England (7.1 per cent) has the lowest concentration of projects in England but with only 4 per cent, Wales has the lowest concentration of all, with no projects reported in Powys and Conwy and only one each in Gwynedd and Anglesey. As we note, the research strategy failed to elicit any data from some counties and several London boroughs. It seems unlikely that these areas lack any street-based youth provision, suggesting that further local research is necessary.

The distribution of street-based youth work

The survey indicates that the largest concentration of street-based youth work projects is in small towns. It appears that in several instances, this provision has been introduced to these areas because of a lack of commercial youth provision and to make good the paucity of building-based Youth Service provision. There did not appear to be a direct link between its existence in such locations and the levels of social exclusion experienced by local young people.

A relatively high proportion of street-based projects are located in rural areas but here provision is uneven, with high concentrations in some areas and low or no provision in

Figure 2.2 Geographic distribution of identified projects



others. It is likely that these projects have been developed as a means of extending Youth Service provision to as wide a geographical area as possible. Work in rural areas tends to focus upon the problems generated for young people by 'social isolation' rather than 'social exclusion' *(Fabes and Banks, 1991; Phillips and Skinner,1994)*.

> They're lucky if their village has a shop, or a chip shop. There's no recreational facilities and they are very visible when they hang out with each other and they're often absolutely bored to tears.

Rural youth work tends to be vulnerable when services are being rationalised, partly because it is relatively expensive:

> There's something like 56 different parishes ... and a very small team of youth workers. So the idea would be, hopefully, to get the local communities or parish councils to put some additional resources or some person-power into sustaining some kind of youth work or project work.

The distribution of projects does not correspond with population distribution. Although there tends to be more provision in areas of deprivation, there is no consistent pattern. This suggests that social exclusion is only one factor influencing the decision to establish street-based provision in any given area.

The types of organisation offering street-based youth work provision

Amongst the 564 survey respondents, 53 per cent of projects are directly managed by the local authority Youth Service. Sixty-seven per cent are either directly managed by

Figure 2.3 The distribution of street-based youth work by type of area

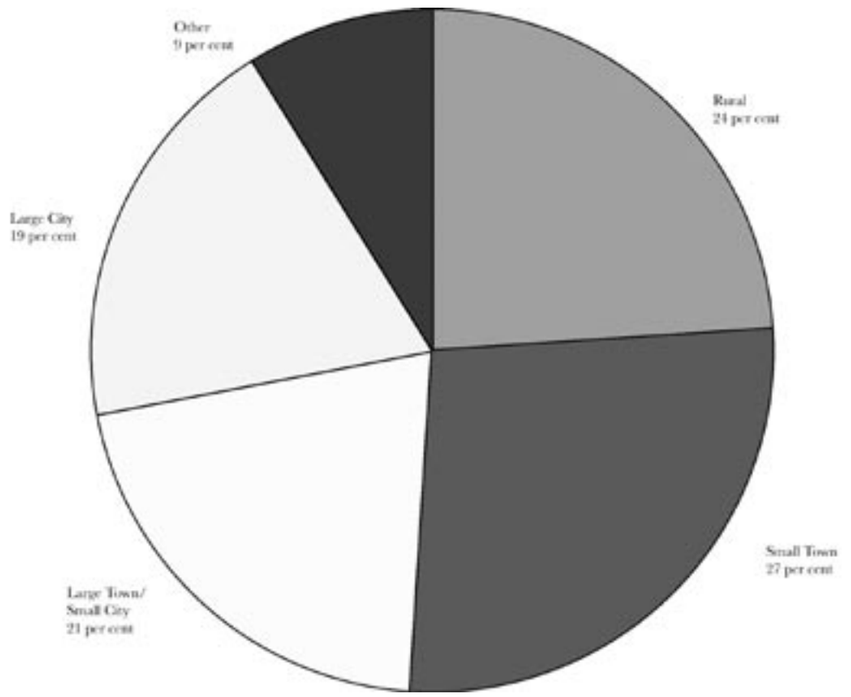
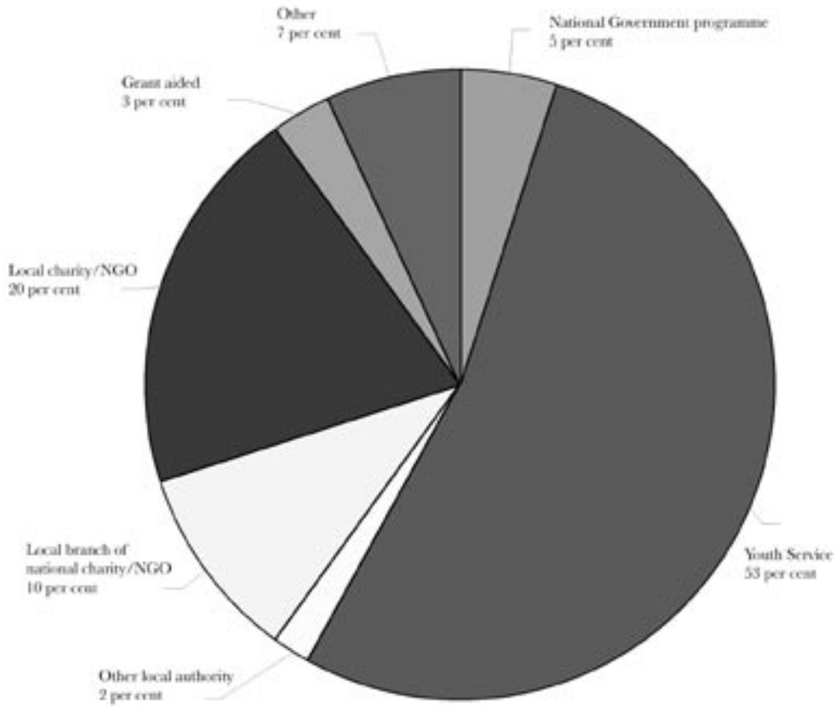


Figure 2.4 Organisational affiliations of detached and outreach projects



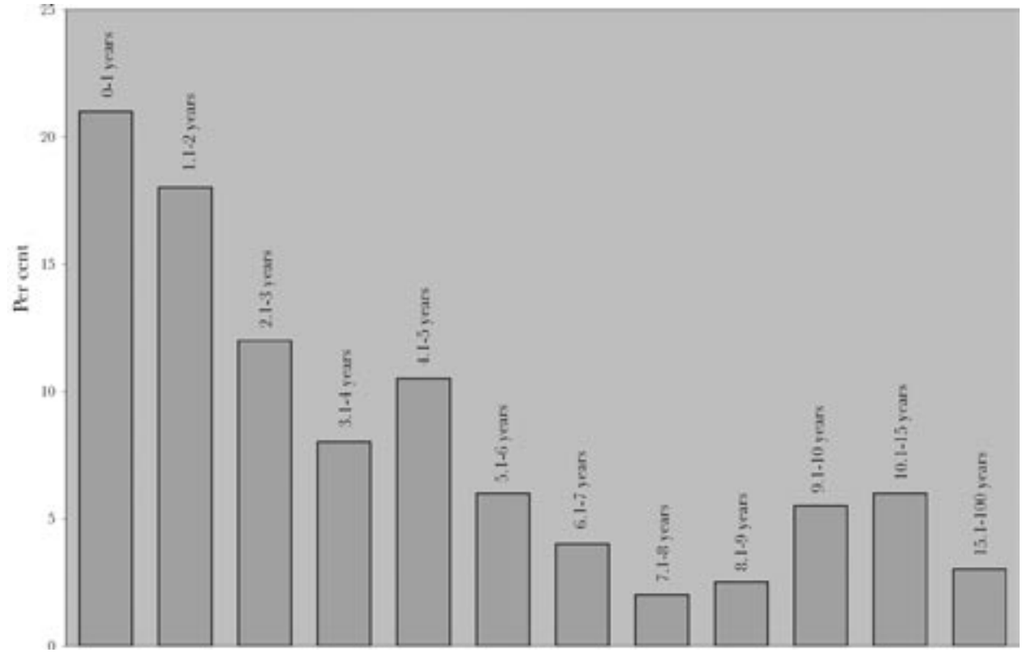
the Youth Service, or voluntary sector projects in receipt of grant-aid from it. Although these projects tend to be amongst the most secure in terms of long-term support, they also tend to be small, staffed mainly by part-time workers, with one full-time member of staff exercising managerial responsibility. These projects are least likely to have multiple funding sources, with 39 per cent receiving all of their funding from the local authority and the others having an average of only 1.9 funding sources.

National and local charities and non-governmental organisations accounted for 30 per cent of projects and tended to be larger than those provided by the Youth Service, employing, on average, three full-time staff, four part-timers and three volunteers. Only 35 per cent of these projects described their funding as secure. Providers included careers companies, the Health Service and the Police. Programmes sponsored by national Government tended to be the newest entrants to the field, having been in existence for two years on average. These programmes tend to be time-limited and usually have a community safety/youth justice orientation.

The age of projects

At the time of the survey, half (282) of the 564 projects had been operating for three years or less and only 24 for 15 years or more.

Figure 2.5 Age of projects



This could suggest that many projects are simply not surviving in the long term or it could be that they are periodically 're-badging' in order to attract successive waves of short-term funding. Both survival and consistency of provision are determined by the nature and level of funding. Survey data indicates a prevalence of short-term funding which tends to militate against the development of coherent local strategies.

> It's the begging bowl feeling … I'd much rather have the money and know where I stand and plan it out over three or four years as a deliberate strategy, rather than annually.

The staffing of street-based youth work

A 'typical' project comprises one full-time worker, with responsibility for administration, monitoring, staff supervision, planning and evaluation, and possibly some face-to-face work as well, two part-time workers and a volunteer, each of whom will be working six hours a week. Workers go out on the streets in twos or threes, doing two three-hour evening sessions with 15 minutes at the beginning of the session for preparation, recording and debriefing. There will be three 'team meetings' a year.

Looking beyond this typical picture staffing presents a complex picture. Whereas 12.5 per cent of youth work staff are full-time workers *(NYA, 2001)*, 23 per cent of the street-based youth workers surveyed were full-time, providing 56 per cent of total staff hours. Part-time workers, 50 per cent of all staff identified in the survey, provide 35 per cent of total staff hours, while volunteers represent 27 per cent of project staff and provide the balance. Twenty-nine per cent of projects have no full-time workers but where they are employed full-time workers average 1.6 per project.

Managing street-based youth work

The responsibilities of most project managers include fundraising; staff recruitment; supervision and training; project development and promotion; liaison with other agencies and their own administrative hierarchy or management committee; the generation and implementation of project policies and procedures; monitoring, evaluation and report writing. Respondents indicated that this plethora of tasks is not infrequently in tension with the need to provide effective staff support and project development. Often managers are part-time and where they are full-time they are frequently responsible for a number of projects or youth centres, or are expected to undertake face-to-face work.

Responses from the 31 telephone interviews indicate that organisational drift can occur when managerial responsibilities and project goals are unclear. Managers are usually accountable to either a line manager, or a management committee, and occasionally both. Simultaneously servicing, supporting and being managed by a committee can create stress for managers, especially where committee members lack a sound understanding of the work. Smaller, local, voluntary organisations tend to recruit 'home grown' people to their management committees and the manager is, therefore, not infrequently responsible for their development as individuals and as a group. Larger voluntary organisations, by contrast, tend to attract strategic partners, with a firmer grasp of the nature of the work, who are able to contribute expertise to committees and resources to projects, thus helping maintain impetus and clarity of purpose and direction.

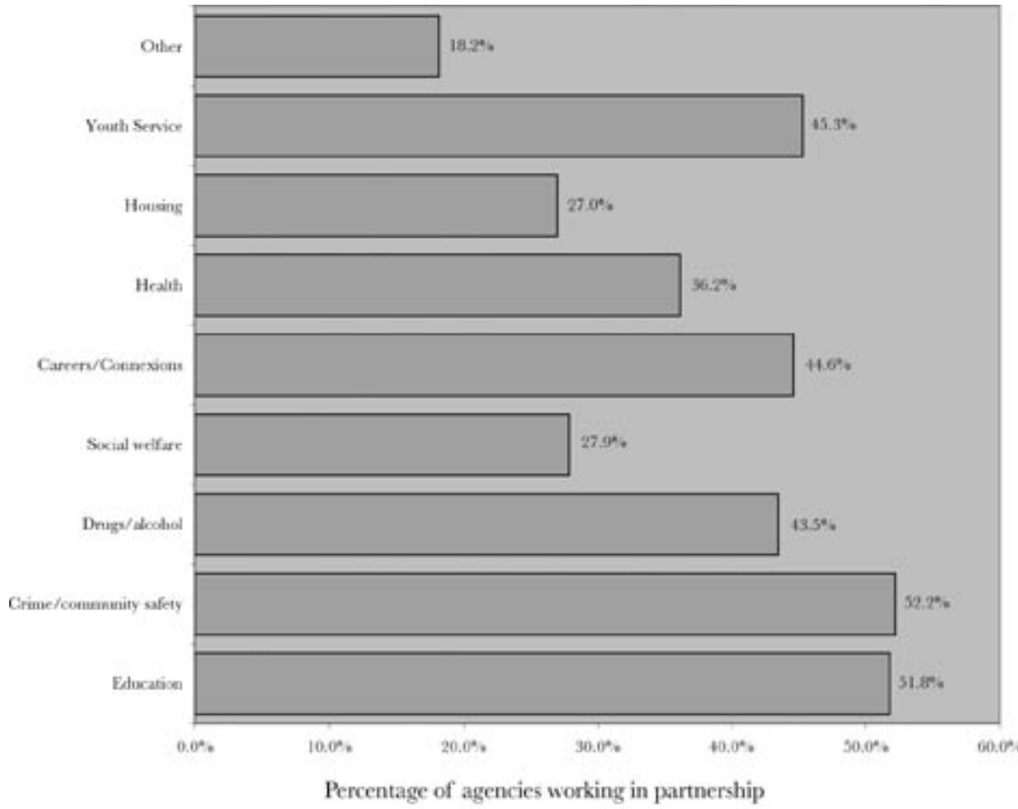
The prevalence of part-time and sessional workers in street-based projects creates particular managerial problems. Communication between managers and part-time and sessional staff is often difficult because face-to-face work usually occurs in the evenings when direct contact with managers is more difficult. Finding times when part-time and sessional workers can all attend team meetings or training events together is similarly difficult, although managers with experience of street-based work appear to be better able to create supportive and flexible systems for their workers. Effective project managers also tend to provide a 'buffer' between face-to-face staff and the demands of senior management, policy makers or funders, mediating demands for the achievement of particular targets or 'outputs' and insulating workers from anxieties about funding and local political issues.

Working in partnership

Partnership arrangements, over and above routine liaison, were identified in 76 per cent of the questionnaire returns. On average, projects have formal partnership links with 4.5 other agencies.

As Figure 2.6 (opposite) indicates, projects are most commonly partnered with agencies concerned with crime and community safety. Partnerships with drugs agencies, the Careers Service, Connexions and education are also common. Some street-work projects provide elements of personal and social education to young people at risk or those excluded from school.

Figure 2.6 Partnership working



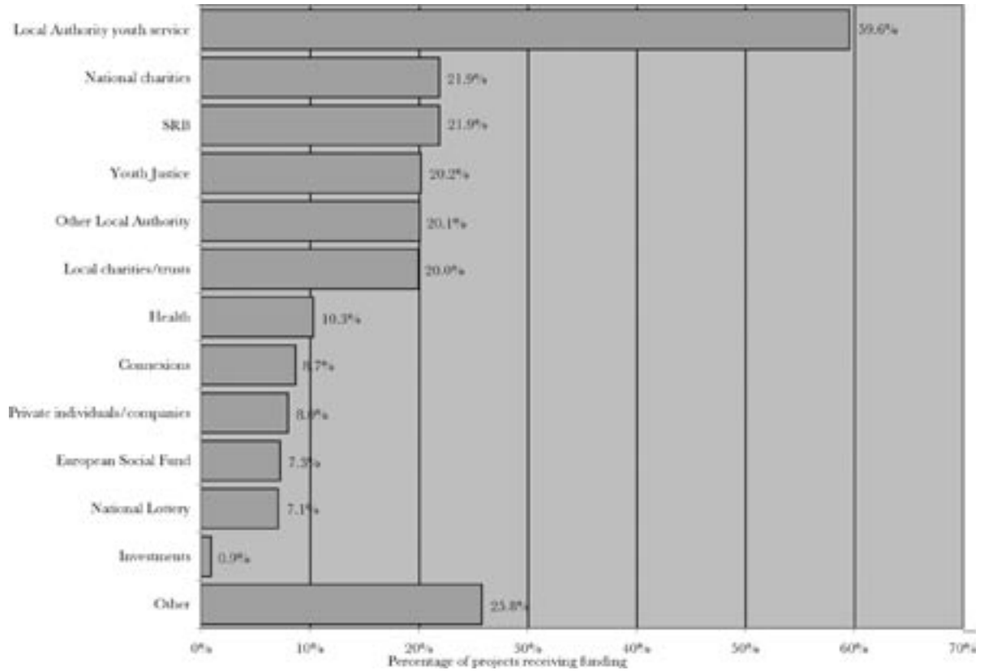
The funding of street-based youth work

> The main issues around funding? Well the most obvious one is getting it! That's the difficult one.

Funding levels vary enormously. A few projects reported budgets of less than £150 per year, after staff costs, enabling two workers to do one weekly session. Others have a turnover of £500,000 or more. Many projects are reliant on short-term funding. The survey reveals that only 46.5 per cent of respondents believed that their future funding was secure. Larger organisations which are able to employ fundraisers are, unsurprisingly, usually more optimistic about their financial prospects and more effective in securing funding. However, it appears that recently some smaller projects have started to band together to formulate funding bids in order to achieve the economies of scale enjoyed by larger projects. Short-term and multiple funding increases the volume of bids projects must make, the amount of monitoring and evaluation it must undertake and the number of reports which must be written. This places additional pressures on managers and full-time workers.

> It has an impact on the project manager and myself as team leader, in the sense that you start to worry whether, by the end of a particular year, we are going to be looking at staff redundancies or losing our own jobs, or the project may be folding totally. That can dominate your thinking, rather than what you're there for, which is to provide a service for young people.

Figure 2.7 Where funding comes from



Few of the new funding streams provide for core funding to cover management, administration and training costs and this emerged as a major concern for project staff and managers.

> The main issue would be (gaining) the infrastructure funding, you know, there are little pots of money around for say health and wellbeing, pregnancy, and all of this, but if you haven't got the infrastructure funding in place, then obviously your projects can't really run without that.

These pressures are multiplied because, frequently, projects also have to generate 'matched funding' from a variety of sources.

> We are in the business of PR ... I don't lie, I don't say we've done this when we haven't. But if there's an audience there who don't give a damn about information on drugs or sexual health or whatever, but want to know what you've done about (something else) you kind of draw out what people want to hear … So maybe one funder would have a concern about something, you would pull out the bits that relate to that to present to the funder.

Clearly, the introduction of Connexions presents new funding opportunities. At the time of the survey, Connexions was already providing funding for 8.7 per cent of projects. The main beneficiaries were local charities, 14 per cent of which received funding, and other national Government programmes, 15 per cent of which benefited from this source.

3 Doing street-based youth work

After receiving complaints about a group of young people hanging about a children's play area on a run-down housing estate, a youth project sent a detached team to the area. The detached workers focused upon the relationship between the young people and residents. They encouraged the young people to meet residents after the local Tenants' Association and district councillors' meetings to look for ways to resolve the tensions. A drama worker was brought in by the youth project to encourage the young people to express their views and devised with them a play entitled 'What about us?'. Local residents, parents, teachers and members of the district council all attended the performance at a local theatre and this helped open a dialogue about local facilities and activities for young people in the area. As a result, some of the young people were introduced to the Millennium Volunteers and became involved in a scheme to raise money for improvements on the estate, including improved youth provision.

The youth work relationship

This chapter draws upon data from telephone interviews and interviews conducted during the 11 project visits. In street-based youth work, as in all youth work, the quality of the face-to-face relationship the worker is able to establish with young people is central to the success of any intervention.

> The biggest thing young people want in detached youth work is somebody to talk to and somebody to listen.

Respondents emphasised that effective work, whether 'target-driven' or 'developmental', is rooted in a relationship of trust and respect and that this must be 'earned' by the worker. In street-based settings, the relationship is particularly important because it is virtually all the worker has to offer.

> The good thing about detached youth work is the fact you (can't) hide behind a snooker table, or a table tennis table, or whatever, we're out there doing it and young people will soon tell you if you're not doing a good job.

Moreover, the relationship must be negotiated because, by definition, street-based youth workers operate predominately on a young person's own territory.

> You could say the youth workers are infringing on young people's space, because the reason the young people are on the streets is that they don't want to be around adults, and that's the debate you go through when you're doing detached work, 'do I have the right to be here?'.

Although street-based workers may take resources or 'props' with them to help in the process of making contact (eg leaflets, stickers, badges), ultimately it is themselves that they bring to each encounter. Thus, successful work requires sensitivity to the wishes and needs of young people and the ability to measure the pace and duration of an intervention.

Method and style in street-based work

Traditionally, street-based youth workers have taken a long term view of their work, recognising that the processes fostering personal development in young people and 'capacity building' in communities can be facilitated but not rushed. This work has been educational in the broadest sense, concerned with talking, listening, summarising and synthesising, informing and advising. Many research participants spoke of the importance of having time for young people; time to develop purposeful professional relationships as a basis for addressing the issues raised:

> That's the key to detached youth work; it's actually going out on their terms and developing real relationships with young people and spending time with them.

> We're one of the few professions that has got time to spend on relationship building with young people.

> I see it as a long-term process, and the needs of the communities I've worked in, in the past, need a long-term commitment in order to start addressing the need.

Related to this notion of time is the idea of space; space to be flexible and creative, and space to work in a manner which is responsive to the pace at which the young people concerned can travel:

> I did a cooking project with a group of young men and, of course, I had to bring them back to the building for that, but it still took me six weeks to build up their confidence in order to bring them into the building.

Within this expansive view of time and space, street-based youth workers must nevertheless be ready in their everyday practice to adapt to the unpredictable and the new.

> It's actually the spontaneity and the enjoyment of it that makes it what it is.

> You never know what will come up next.

> One thing that is fairly consistent in detached youth work is that things change quite frequently. The young people that we see can change from one week to the next … so it's always shifting.

At any one time, workers are making new contacts, consolidating and developing existing relationships and maintaining the networks that link them to those with whom they have previously worked. This latter activity is crucial because it is via such networks that new contacts are made.

> To me detached youth work is a project that continually does it all the time, so it's like a conveyor belt, you're contacting new contacts and you're renewing old acquaintances, but you're continually doing it.

The worker must manage this complex process, which as the survey indicates, will usually take place within time-limited projects funded to achieve closely defined targets.

Establishing and maintaining professional boundaries

Respondents indicated that it is in the nature of the work that they are often party to confidential information about the young people with whom they work and their families. This sometimes creates ethical and legal dilemmas *(Banks, 1999; Morgan and Banks, 1999)*. Most projects visited during the research have codes of practice or statements relating to ethical practice. These serve, amongst other things, as a rationale for why workers are unable to assume certain roles, participate in or, by witnessing them, be a party to some of the events they encounter on the streets. Nevertheless, policies do not protect workers from all the dilemmas they encounter:

> Maybe they're rolling a spliff that they're going to start up, our worker will say, 'it's time for us to go now', and it's quite interesting explaining that to the one you were talking to. 'We have to go, because some of your mates are going to start taking drugs. We have to go; we'll get into bother otherwise'. And sometimes they'll say 'alright' and other times. 'No, don't do that yet. I haven't finished', and you see the dynamics changing, and you go back to finish what you're doing, and they're away.

Situations arise that no policy can anticipate. For example, in the research workshops, respondents raised issues about what to do when a young sexual abuser discloses their abuse and their intention to maintain the abusive relationship; how to deal with suicide threats from a heroin user; or how to handle the cultural and political dimensions of intimidation and theft amongst young asylum seekers. Practitioners believe that such dilemmas are inherent in the nature of the work. Consequently, they accept that they must assume personal responsibility and sometimes make a 'judgment call', balancing a desire to maintain good relationships with a responsibility to stay within the bounds of the law and their professional code and to do so in ways that minimise the risks posed to both the young people and themselves.

Different types of dilemmas arise for some workers in establishing the boundary between private and professional life. Youth and community work has long been a vehicle whereby some service users become service providers *(Dickenson, undated)* and many street-based workers, professionals and more frequently volunteers, come from or live in the neighbourhoods they serve. This is often regarded as an asset, offering workers unique access to local people, their values and issues. However, it can throw up acute dilemmas for workers when, for example, neighbourhood values, like not informing the authorities about low-level crime and deviance, must be balanced against multi-agency commitments to information sharing and crime reduction. Thus, gaining credibility in one setting may well serve to undermine it in another.

At a more mundane level, those living locally have the perennial problem of demarcating the personal and professional:

> They are all able to access me at any time really ... they know where I live, they know my phone number; when I come back after I drop my fourth son off at school I see them. When you walk down the streets you see them; it's a very small town ... youth work in this area isn't a job, it's more a way of life ... I mean, they're part of your life, it's such a small area, like I say, it's not like you finish work and walk away.

Street-based practice demands of workers that they contact, make relationships and communicate effectively with young people, while simultaneously requiring them to manage the boundaries between the personal and professional in a setting where the personal is an integral aspect of the work.

Control

In the wake of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), the Home Office and Youth Justice Board for England and Wales established 376 statutory Community Safety Partnerships, 155 multi-agency Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), 70 Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs) and 50 Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSPs). These new entities attracted new voluntary sector and commercial providers into a field, many of which have embraced street-based methods *(Coles,2000; Pitts, 2003)*. Of the projects involved in partnership working, 52 per cent reported partnerships with criminal justice and community safety agencies and organisations.

The response of face-to-face workers to this 'criminalisation' of their role has, in some instances been pragmatic, involving changes in recording practices rather than in the work itself. However, most appear to experience a tension between the demands of effective practice with challenging young people and the expectation that they will be able to change problematic behaviour in the short-term. Several seemed keenly aware of the effects the 'criminalisation' of youth policy had upon public perceptions of the role of the street-based youth worker:

> I mean people outside, not all but some, now have an idea that we are a kind of soft police force. And if the residents perceive that they have a problem with the young people, they will have the idea that they can get a detached team in and that we'll sort all that out ... the general public have the idea that we are there for the adult issues of controlling young people, so that's been a development over the last three years.

They felt this development resulted in unrealistic demands being placed upon them by professional and political partners:

> It's like responding to councillors' needs and being a sort of pseudo-police force, is the big one that everyone's talking about at the moment.

The assumption that street-based youth workers can simply be parachuted into an area to police young people appears to be erroneous, as this respondent, a police officer working on a police youth crime prevention outreach project, observed

> When the project was written it was written around responding to analytical categories ie looking at where youth nuisance and crime issues were and sending the officers into those areas. We tried to do that initially and it proved to us that you were just fire-fighting, you weren't making an impact at all, you were moving around from area to area on a relatively frequent basis. Quite simply, you can't do it. What working with young people in an outreach situation needs is sustained, long-term work. You need time to engage the young people, get their trust and get to know them, what makes them tick and then to actually alter, or try and influence, their behaviour and activities, and you

> don't do that by jumping around from area to area. You've got to work in one area, concentrate on that area and try to make a difference in that area and that, of course, means that sometimes other areas are saying 'why can't we have this service?'

However, where inter-agency Community Safety Partnerships are working well, they can obviate the need for formal criminal justice intervention.

> The workers were originally alerted to the situation by local residents and the council. A young man had been left alone by his family who had gone overseas for about six weeks, and he had been inviting his friends around. Residents had been complaining about nuisance behaviour in the street, and the workers had observed some under-age young people illegally driving a car that belongs to the uncle of the young man. The workers made contact with the community representatives who had reported the problem. Together they devised a strategy which involved work with the group of young people hanging around the flat and individual work with the young man to explain the problem and offer him some support in resisting pressure from friends to turn the flat into a 24/7 party venue.

It is evident that criminal justice-oriented initiatives can contribute to a more traditional style of developmental youth work. In the YIP which was one of the 11 projects studied in depth, staff worked on a broad range of issues with hard-to-reach young people in the broader social networks and friendship groups of the 50 young people formally targeted by the YIP partners. Nonetheless many street-based workers are concerned that sharing information about young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour could lead to formal intervention and consequent stigmatisation which might compound their 'criminal careers'. Moreover, some respondents feared that too close an association with the justice system might jeopardise their relationships with young people.

> With my other hat on, my Youth Offending hat … which I keep very, very quiet about when I'm talking to them because obviously … that would worry them …

In one of the projects surveyed, Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSPs), in which young people may be returned to court for sentencing if they breach the conditions of the programme, was about to be introduced. From a mainstream youth work perspective, these programmes appeared to sit uneasily with other work in which participation was voluntary and many service users had had a brush with the youth justice system and harboured suspicions about its agents.

The issue of control was also raised in relation to Connexions. As originally conceived, Connexions aimed to involve street-based youth workers in the identification, support, tracking, and information-sharing about hard-to-reach young people, defined as those not in education, employment or training (sometimes known as 'NEETs') *(Merton, 1998; Green, Maguire and Canny, 2001)*. This evoked similar anxieties amongst street-based youth workers to those expressed about what they see as the gradual 'criminalisation' of the field. These concerns have, if anything, been compounded with the publication of *Transforming Youth Work (2002)* which observes that the Youth Service will be at the core of Connexions, contributing to 'cross-cutting preventive strategies including identification, referral and tracking', and the subsequent *Respect and Responsibility* White Paper *(2003)* on anti-social

behaviour which identifies the Youth Service and Connexions as key members of Crime Reduction Partnerships, and appears to suggest a more directly controlling role for both. As Hayter *(2003)* has argued:

It (the White Paper) draws the Youth Service more explicitly into the enforcement end of dealing with anti-social behaviour than has been the case before, not just prevention.

In the telephone interviews, project visits and workshops, it was evident that the expectation that workers should exert direct and immediate control over the behaviour of young people viewed as problematic, not least because it appeared to be jeopardising the principle of voluntary participation in a negotiated relationship, a core value of mainstream youth work.

The political and policy context of street-based youth work

At street level, the goals of an intervention are negotiated between the worker and the young person. However, the goals the worker brings to this negotiation are determined by those of the agency; the professional orientation and value base of its staff; the requirements of funding bodies; central and local government policy; and the agreements and protocols devised with members of any multi-agency partnerships with which the agency is involved. The responsibility of the worker in this encounter is, therefore, to interpret and mediate what we might call these 'institutional goals', in their face-to-face work with young people.

> I think the key issue is that they have to be … managed by people who understand the work, who will allow flexibility and creativity to develop, for workers and projects to be clear about who they are, what they are and where they're going and clear about how they're going to get there, so there's a lot of aim-setting, objective-setting, target-setting, which is coming from young people, coming from workers and not necessarily coming from what the Government says, or what the funders say.
>
> So in terms of objectives, yes we're meeting those hard targets but we're doing it by developing the young people.

Inevitably, the pursuit of tightly specified outcomes in target-driven work can create tensions, particularly between managers and workers:

> They're saying 'hot spots, hot spots' and I'm saying 'yes this is a hot spot and still is a hot spot, but I need to keep working with these young people before I can go off to another hot spot', because it's not going to solve the problem if I just give them a few activities, take them off the streets for two days a week and then finish working with them ... It's hard to keep working if you keep responding to hot spots, but my boss keeps ... flagged up and saying 'we should go and have a look at that'. Thankfully, it sounds awful, but the kids I am working with are the kids who are really causing the trouble, so I can get away with it at the moment.

Several workers noted that many of the concerns expressed through current Government policy echoed their own. However, they also recognised that to focus solely on the

pursuit of targeted outcomes would undermine their effectiveness with the young people targeted. Some expressed concern about the 'targets' trailed in *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Service*, and in particular the one which indicates that 60 per cent of 13 to 19-year-olds should undergo personal and social development programmes resulting in accredited outcomes. This, they argued, might precipitate a drift from work with high need/risk young people towards less problematic groups with whom such targets could be more easily attained. Other respondents suggested that growing pressure to work with larger numbers could also encourage such 'mission drift':

> In accountancy terms 'value for money' is represented by the number of youth work contacts divided by the number of hours, but this doesn't fit well with reaching the hard to reach.

Most workers expressed ambivalence about target-driven and single-issue work because it tended to undermine the principle that the goals of intervention should be negotiable between the young person and worker.

> If you've got very specific target groups that you've got to meet and address, you can't just be walking down the street and somebody comes up to you who's not in that target group and say 'Oh, I'm sorry, I can't talk to you today, it's Wednesday; I can only see you on Thursday'.
>
> Although we're a drugs project ... you can't just deal with somebody's drug problem if they're homeless and there's other issues going on.

Workers tend to accept the fact that they have to manage their face-to-face work in a policy and organisational environment which is not always 'tuned-in', or sympathetic, to the realities of fieldwork. However, they also believe that to achieve the best deal for young people, they and their agencies must be effective political and organisational 'players' in their own right:

> What I've found is the three forces ... you've got young people, you've got the community and obviously the people in it, and you've got the ... power, which is the council or professionals or people that are holding the money to do the re-housing or whatever it is, they're the kind of three areas ... so it's about managing all that.

Managing the demands of these three stakeholders, the young people, the community and the funders/policy makers, requires skills of compromise, negotiation and mediation. Workers appeared to be particularly aware that young people are members of their communities. Indeed, it is sometimes the high visibility of certain young people within those communities which precipitates the intervention in the first place *(Brown, 1995; Measor and Squires, 2000)*. As a result, workers often find themselves mediating between the various stakeholders:

> You are playing an advocacy role a lot of the time (and) adults within the community do have rights as well ... I find that if you go into an area to work with a group who are isolated, if you do that against or aside from the community, you become isolated as well. So it's very much about building bridges and being in the middle.

An awareness of the importance of the community sometimes leads on to work aimed at encouraging young people 'to take more active roles in their communities'. One project manager observed that:

> Detached workers went out and they made contact with the young people on the recreation ground in the summer and did lots of group work with them, and then helped them develop a vision of a youth centre that they said they wanted and linked them in with the parish council and took them through a whole community development process, at the same time offering them trips and activities to keep them engaged.

Such work can only be undertaken effectively by workers with an understanding of political processes *(Jeffs, 2001)*. For these workers, face-to-face practice embraces a remit to work with local representatives and institutions as a means of facilitating the participation of young people or, in some circumstances, representing their interests:

> … we encourage young people to attend meetings, but as we all know, meetings aren't particularly attractive to young people so the workers attend those and put the young people's case. We would encourage the young people to say to us what they want us to say at those meetings and we will take that forward.

Such advocacy, and the tendency of street-based workers to lend a sympathetic ear to the perspectives of young people, does not always endear them to local residents for whom the presence of 'youth on the streets' may be construed as a threat. As a result, workers may sometimes be perceived as condoning or colluding with young people's (mis)behaviour.

> Sometimes you have to move on because we've had complaints about us from the community saying that we're basically aiding and abetting them.

The costs of partnership

As we have noted, of the 564 survey respondents, 74 per cent were involved in multi-agency partnerships. While most workers believe partnership working to be an important and positive principle, concern was voiced that in practice, partnerships sometimes tended to focus on the realisation of targets prescribed by national Government to the detriment of locally relevant strategies *(Stenson and Factor, 1994)*. Although Government and programme partners wish to utilise the skills and knowledge of street-based youth work to realise their policy objectives, it appears that they are often experienced as unwilling to frame these objectives in partnership with youth workers. Several respondents argued that youth work is treated as the 'poor relation' in the development of local and national youth policy.

Some respondents, particularly those from the voluntary sector, complained that the responses of statutory agencies are often tokenistic, patronising or both and that sometimes they receive no response at all. Bureaucracy, 'inertia', a lack of understanding of the role of the voluntary sector, as well as a tendency for some statutory agencies to 'use the voluntary sector to achieve their own ends', can, it appears, make partnership working frustrating and unproductive for some youth workers.

Government expectations of youth work have changed in the recent past and many workers are concerned about being required to play an increasingly prescriptive role. They believe that a stronger element of control and compulsion is insinuating itself into the work and that this could be setting up mainstream youth work to fail because workers are neither philosophically disposed towards, nor trained to fulfil such a role. However, as one observed:

> As long as the dominant partner, the Government, holds the 'purse strings' and specifies the 'outputs', youth work will be powerless to resist.

Some respondents criticised what they saw as the acquiescence of youth work in the face of recent changes, suggesting that it must be possible to make better use of the power they have acquired by dint of their proven ability to engage those hard-to-reach young people targeted by new governmental initiatives. For them, the recent emphasis upon the transformation of the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of targeted groups, and the achievement of demonstrable 'outcomes', sits uneasily with the social educational emphasis of mainstream youth work wherein the worker acts as a facilitator of a young person's social development. Occasionally projects opt to withdraw from formal partnership working with agencies with the power to impose formal sanctions (eg the police or the benefits agency). Others sometimes refuse to bid for monies that would require them to exert overt control over, or undertake surveillance of, young people *(Jeffs and Smith, 1999)*.

A number of respondents suggested that street-based youth work can only be successfully integrated into multi-agency partnerships if other partners recognise its time, space and relationship requirements. Some youth workers expressed concern that having achieved sufficient legitimacy in the eyes of a young person to make a referral to another agency, the referral can be sabotaged by the insensitivity of staff in that agency. On the other hand, a respondent from a partner agency observed that it was sometimes hard to persuade street-based workers to make a referral because of their sometimes unwarranted suspicions of other agencies and their staff. Unwillingness to work in partnership with other agencies is problematic insofar as it deprives young people of specialist services from which they might benefit. It can also undermine good youth work if it results in workers striving to be 'all things to all young people'.

The benefits of partnership

Despite the problems in practice, most respondents perceive partnership working to be an important professional responsibility. Several maintained that when agencies cooperate, young people gain access to services youth work alone cannot provide. A number were of the opinion that it is appropriate that funding should be contingent upon a partnership approach 'because it works', and they also see a correspondence between the priorities of their agencies, the interests of the young people with whom they are in contact and the intentions of current Government policy.

> A lot of issues and concerns we have are on the Government's agenda anyway. So we haven't had to stray away in order to get funding at this moment in time, we've been able to stay on course.

These practitioners hold that working with other agencies enhances youth work professionalism because of the additional skills and knowledge developed as a result, and they believe that this broadening of their role does not undermine youth work values.

Respondents suggested that positive outcomes from partnership working are often associated with 'a shared history', 'good personal contacts', established 'professional respect' and the existence of local political cultures that foster collaborative working practices. Positive partnership working, it appears, is also predicated upon an open acknowledgment that agencies have different legal and administrative responsibilities, working styles, professional boundaries and are unable always to share information. Respondents who spoke positively about partnership working acknowledge the constraints under which other agencies labour, stressing the need for sensitivity and the investment of time and energy in joint training, clarification of managerial responsibilities, line management arrangements and the harmonisation of agency protocols.

4 The young people reached by street-based youth work

Rob, aged 15, lives on a housing estate and is one of a group in touch with the local street-based youth worker. His home life is troubled and at one point he became homeless. Because the project is small and the workers are part-time they are worried that they will not be able to follow through their work with Rob. They give him the phone number of the only full-time youth worker in the area. She endeavours to link Rob with a Connexions PA employed by the project's parent organisation. However, such is the demand locally, that there is a waiting list to see the PA. Meanwhile, Rob is not attending his educational support unit. Although the team has endeavoured to maintain regular contact with him, the workers are starting to worry because they have not seen Rob for two weeks.

Contact with young people

In the preceding month, the 564 projects surveyed had worked with a total of 65,325 young people, an average of 129 per project, representing 2.25 young people per staff hour worked. Unfortunately, this way of measuring contact cannot distinguish between, for example, a quick 'hello' and intensive individual support. Eighty-one per cent of contacts were in the Connexions age group (13-19), indicating that street-based youth workers in the projects we surveyed were in contact with approximately 1.2 per cent of young people in the age range. However, as we have noted, because only 40 per cent of the projects surveyed responded, it is likely that, nationally, street-based youth workers are in touch with a far larger number of young people.

On average, 62 per cent of young people contacted were male and 38 per cent female. This gender imbalance can be accounted for in part by the fact that young men tend to use the street as a meeting place and a recreational venue more than young women. However, it may also speak of a continuing tendency for youth work intervention to focus upon the needs of, and risks posed by, young men, to the detriment of young women. Moreover, with the growing 'criminalisation' of street work, there is a built-in bias towards work with young men in schemes which target youth nuisance or criminality amongst young people *(Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990; Pearce and Stanko, 2000)*.

Fifteen per cent of young people contacted were described as having an ethnic minority background, a figure slightly higher than the 12 per cent in the age range in the population of England and Wales as a whole. However, when we consider that street work tends to target poorer, socially excluded, young people a discrepancy appears. By 1995, 40 per cent of African-Caribbeans and 59 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the UK, which are moreover very young populations, were located in the poorest fifth of the population. This contrasts with only 18 per cent of the white population *(Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995)*. In London, by the mid-1990s up to 70 per cent of the residents on the poorest housing estates were from ethnic minorities *(Power and Turnstall, 1997)*. Moreover, African-Caribbean young people are excluded from school almost six times more frequently than their white counterparts and black, and increasingly Asian,

young people are substantially over-represented in the youth justice system *(Pitts, 2001)*. It may be that other forms of youth work are being deployed to make contact with these vulnerable ethnic and cultural minority groups but this is clearly an area which requires further investigation.

Needs, difficulties and issues

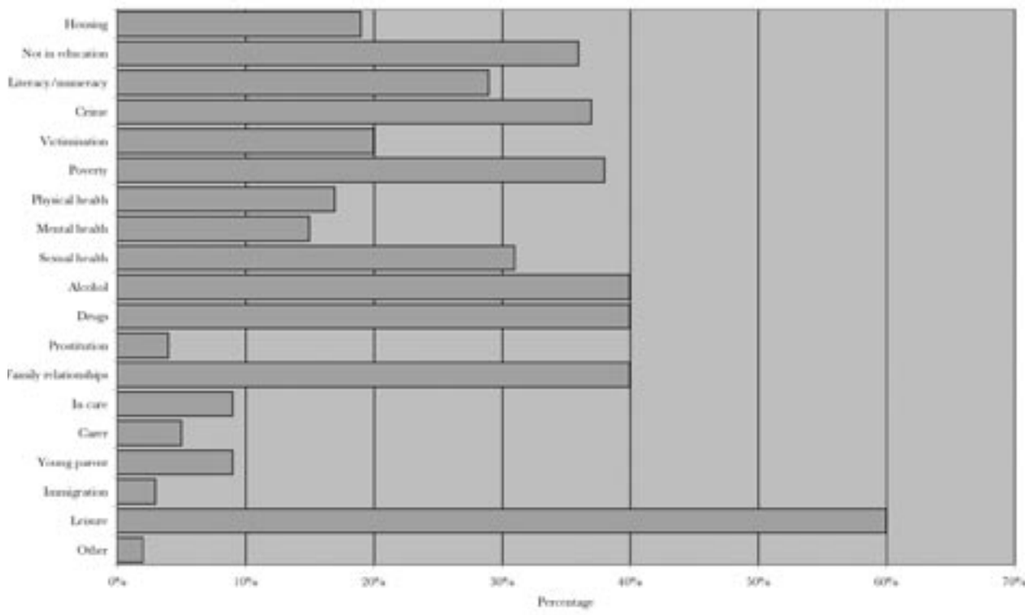
As we note in Chapter 3, the focus of work with the young people in touch with street-based workers is, to some extent, determined by the remit of the agency or project. Projects undertaking only outreach work tend to deal with a significantly higher proportion of young people encountering serious difficulties with housing, employment, crime, poverty, physical and mental health, and being in care. One outreach project manager noted that:

> The issues are often complex and concern multiple needs … very few people come in here presenting one issue.

The most frequently reported difficulty experienced by young people in touch with detached work projects (60 per cent) concerned lack of leisure facilities.

> Every time we see them they're drinking and we say to them 'what's happened this week' and the most exciting thing that's happened to them is they're sitting there drinking a bottle of cider. So even that's getting boring for them now.

Figure 4.1 The issues presented by the young people *[source: the national survey of 564 projects]*



However, this did not mean that the problems they faced were trivial. In the telephone interviews, projects were asked to estimate the proportion of young people known to them experiencing difficulties in a number of different areas of their lives. Their responses indicated that on average, 40 per cent have difficulties with alcohol and drugs, 39 per cent with family relationships, 38 per cent with poverty and 37 per cent with crime. Respondents also estimated that 35 per cent of contacts were not in education, employment or training. These findings suggest that street-based projects are in contact with a high proportion of so-called 'NEETs'.

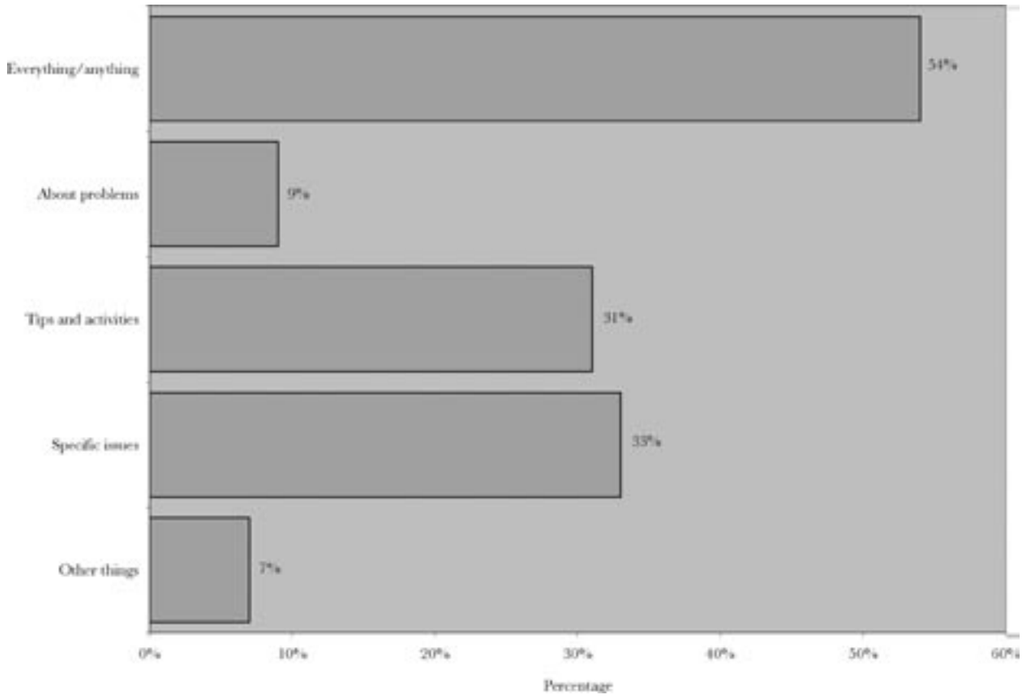
> I think the odd one is working, but then it would be like probably a cash in hand job, or a lot of them would probably be operating illegally, doing something to make some money.

> Education is a problem, temporary exclusion often leads to permanent exclusion in the final year of school and they are just basically left to roam around on the streets in the daytime. So I say for 14 to 16s it's education that's a big one.

What young people think about street-based youth work

During the visits to projects, researchers accompanied street-based workers and asked the young people they encountered to complete a brief questionnaire. (This should not be confused with the ten-point social exclusion inventory discussed below which was completed by street-based youth workers.] One hundred and two questionnaires were completed, 63 per cent by young men and 37 per cent by young women, virtually the same gender split as in the national survey. In terms of ethnicity, 74 per cent of

Figure 4.2 Things the young people talk about with the workers



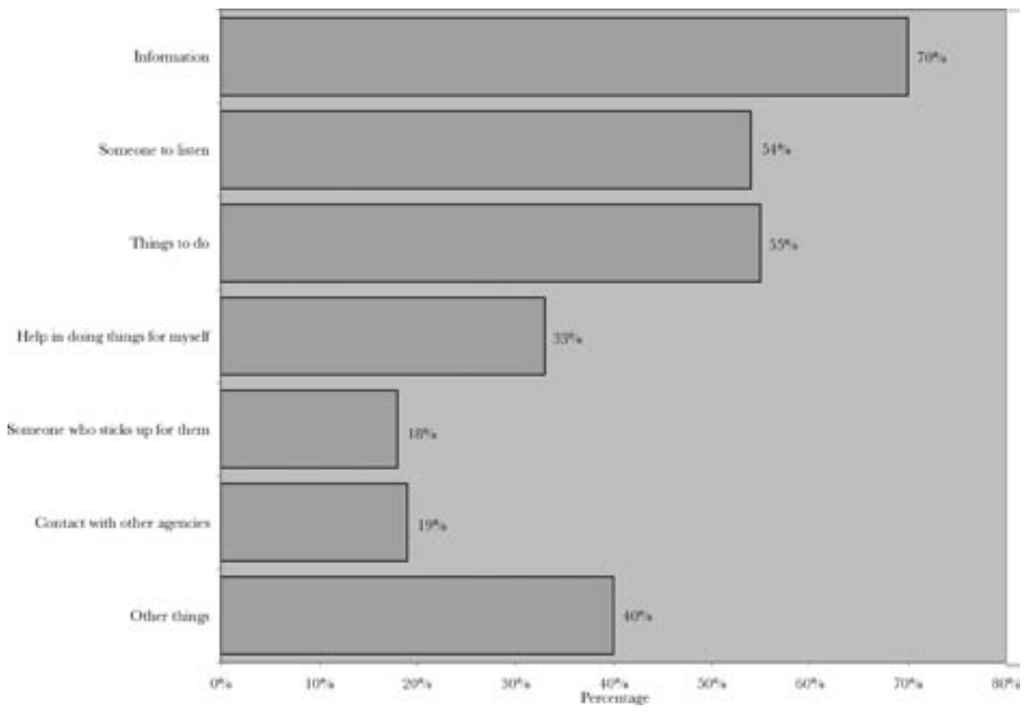
participating young people identified themselves as White, 4 per cent Black/African-Caribbean, 13 per cent Asian, 6 per cent Mixed Heritage and 4 per cent identified themselves as 'other'. This is a higher proportion of ethnic minority young people than revealed in the national survey. The ages of respondents ranged from 9 to 19 with 14 as the average.

Fifty-three per cent of these young people had been in contact with the youth worker for over one year while another 6 per cent had met the worker in the preceding six months. Asked how often they met the youth workers, 67 per cent said between one and three times a week. In the main, such meetings take place on the street (61 per cent) but 42 per cent indicated that they also meet workers at the project base (45 per cent of all street work projects identified in the national survey offered some form of off-street provision).

While 54 per cent said they talked about 'everything and anything' with the workers, 33 per cent focused on specific issues such as sex, drugs, relationships and difficulties at school. Asked to list their reasons for talking to the workers, 32 per cent replied that it was because the workers are helpful in providing information, giving advice and organising trips. 'Other reasons' included 'nothing else to do', 'someone to talk to about day-to-day things' or simply 'to have a chat'.

When asked who initiated any action emanating from these conversations, 65 per cent of the young people said that they plan and decide things with the workers and 28 per cent said that the workers usually do what the young people ask them to. This finding offers an interesting illustration of the negotiated nature of the relationship.

Figure 4.3 What the young people have gained from the workers

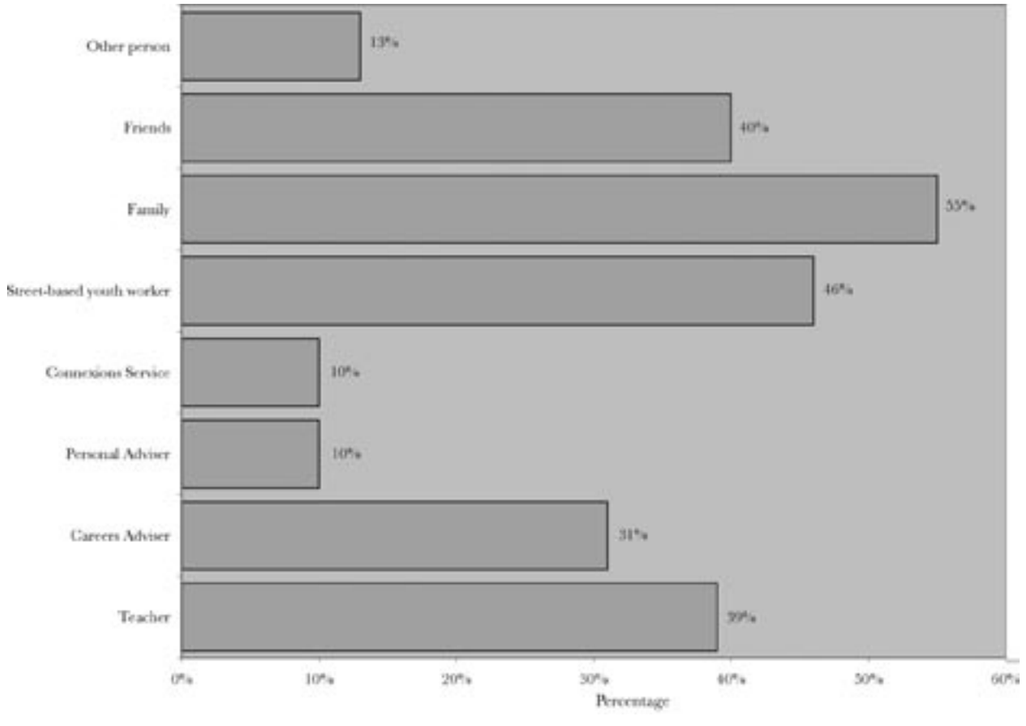


Seventy per cent of the young people said they gained information as a result of encounters with the worker, 55 per cent have found things to do, and 54 per cent value the fact the worker listens to them. Given that most projects aim to 'empower young people' it is interesting that 33 per cent of respondents reported that they feel more able to do things for themselves because of contact with the workers.

Street-based youth workers rank second only to families as a source of information about education, training and work; with the family identified by 55 per cent of young respondents and street-based youth workers by 46 per cent. Forty per cent identified friends as their source of careers advice. Careers Advisers, while less significant, were still important at 31 per cent. Connexions and PAs, had only been operating for a limited time in a limited number of areas when the questionnaires were administered but both were cited as a source of careers advice and information by 10 per cent of respondents.

That the family is the major source of information about educational opportunities and careers accords with the findings of other studies *(Pitts, 2001)*. The significance of street-based youth workers is an important finding, however, and could suggest that expanding the number of street-based initiatives designed to provide disadvantaged young people and their families with relevant educational and vocational information, advice and support, would be a worthwhile investment. This possibility is underscored by data from the ten-point social exclusion inventory which suggests that the majority of young people contacted by street-based youth workers are not in contact with any other youth provision or agency.

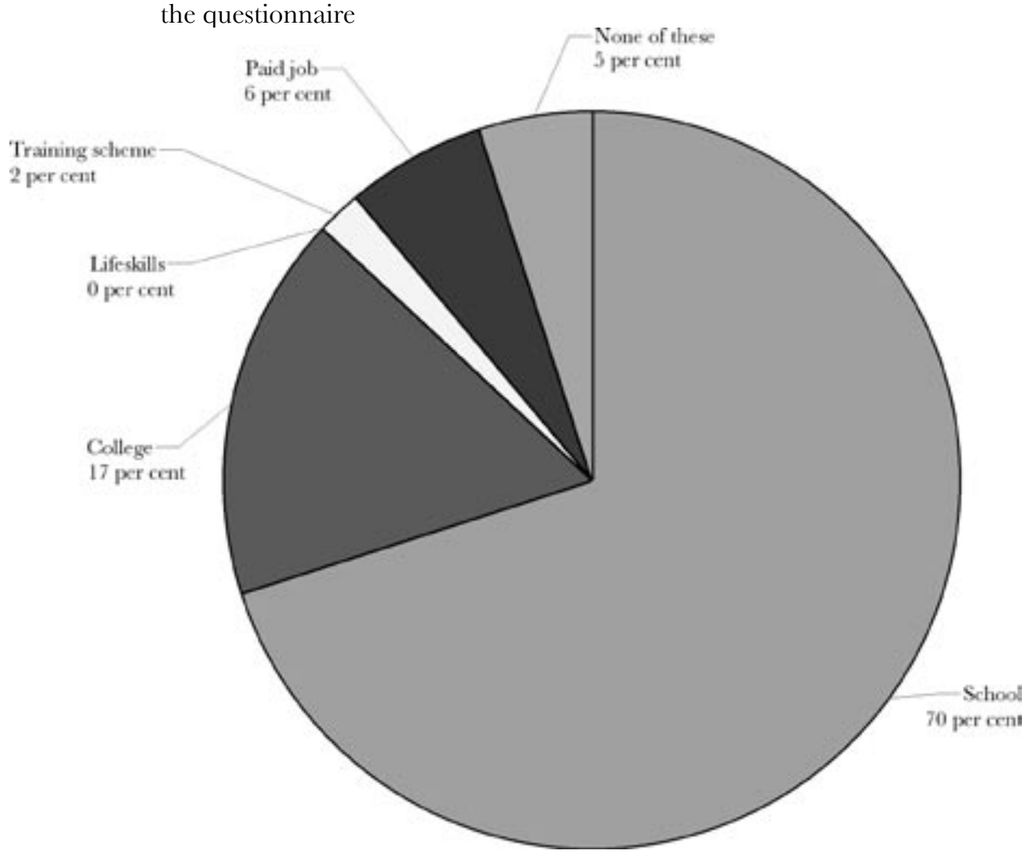
Figure 4.4 Sources of information on education, work or training



The data collected from the young people's questionnaire was anomalous in one important respect. Eighty-seven per cent of the young people completing the questionnaire said that they were attending school or college, 2 per cent said they were in work and only 5 per cent claimed not to be engaged in education, training or employment.

This is a far more positive picture than the one derived from the estimates of telephone interviewees' or the 10-point social exclusion inventory completed by workers about young people known to them (see Appendix 1). There are a number of possible reasons for this discrepancy. Most obviously, adult respondents may have painted a bleaker picture, or young people may have painted a rosier one, than was in fact the case. However, the research team felt that this was unlikely. In the main, the questionnaires were completed during street work sessions, but only by those young people who chose to do so; several declined. Those completing the questionnaire were disproportionately younger than the average; almost all were of school age. In answering that they were at school, it is possible that respondents were telling us where they were supposed to be spending their days rather than where they were actually spending them. Moreover, because much of the work the projects undertook with young people with the most severe difficulties was on a one-to-one basis, often taking place in rooms on the project's premises, researchers had very limited access to them.

Figure 4.5 The educational and employment status of the young people responding to the questionnaire



Is street-based youth work reaching 'socially excluded' young people?

Workers from each of the 11 projects studied in depth were asked to complete a 'ten-point social exclusion inventory' on 12 randomly selected young people with whom they were in contact (see Appendix 1). However, in the event, the choice of young people tended to be determined by their availability. The inventory identifies ten potential problem areas in a young person's life: accommodation, family relationships, drug use, crime etc. Each factor is scored on a four-point scale to establish its intensity. The resulting inclusion/exclusion ranking makes it possible to establish the nature and level of problems confronting the young person and/or dealt with by the project.

Ten point inventories were completed by youth workers at two points, approximately three months apart. On the first occasion 96 inventories were completed and on the second 76. The characteristics and the scores of the 20 young people who evaporated between visits were similar to those of the 76 sampled at both points. Their absence is primarily attributable to difficulties in contacting the relevant workers again or to the ending of the young person's contact with the project, rather than the characteristics of the young people.

It was evident from the data that most of the 11 projects were working with a mixture of young people at high-, medium- and low-need/risk. This finding corresponds with other research which indicates that adolescent peer groups in 'low socio-economic status neighbourhoods', where most street-based youth work projects are located, will usually be composed of individuals at varying levels of risk and need *(Wikstrom and Loeber, 1997; Meason and Squires, 2000; Sanders, 2003)*. The data from the social exclusion inventory confirms, however, that street-based work reaches and works with those socially excluded young people who are targeted by relevant Government programmes.

Did it work? The impact of street-based youth work on young people

Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon and any changes in the predicament of young people over time cannot simply be attributed to the intervention of a street-based youth worker. Moreover, in the present study time, resources and methodological constraints prevented the research team from establishing a control group of matched young people in matched neighbourhoods against which to measure the impact of street-based interventions over time. Nor can we rule out the possibility that youth workers completing the inventories put a more optimistic gloss on the outcomes of their interventions that a disinterested researcher might have done although, in general, on our project visits we were impressed by the realism of workers as well as their modesty in terms of the claims they made for the impact of their work. However, the ten-point social exclusion inventory focuses upon readily observable phenomena such as whether or not a young person was in receipt of an income, taking hard drugs or sleeping rough. If changes occurred in the areas identified and targeted by the project, it would be evidenced in the inventory.

The impact of street-based youth work interventions over time

As Figure 4.6 (on page 45) shows, on average, the levels of social exclusion experienced by the 76 young people identified at both the first and second project visits, fell between

visits in all but one category. The higher score on the 'welfare agency contact' category is largely due to an increase in the number of young people referring themselves to a welfare agency, rather than an onset of a particular social problem and, as such, may be construed as a positive outcome of intervention. On average, the degree of social exclusion experienced by 61 per cent of the young people fell between the two points, 12 per cent remained the same and 27 per cent had a higher level at the second point.

Of the 76 young people on whom inventories were completed at two points, almost 29 per cent were unemployed or not in education or training at the first point, falling to 21 per cent by the second visit. Those with no income and not in receipt of benefits fell from 24 per cent to 20 per cent between visits. Those deemed to be a core member of a group involved in 'anti-social' activity declined from 18 per cent to 4 per cent. School attendance and active participation in structured youth activities rose from 26 per cent to 37 per cent while the proportion banned from youth provision dropped from 3 per cent to zero. The numbers known to be offending diminished by almost a third, from 45 per cent to 31 per cent. The proportion in adequate accommodation rose from 62 per cent to 68 per cent and the numbers sleeping rough fell from 7 per cent to 1.5 per cent. Those attending school, work or a modern apprenticeship without difficulties remained stationary, 37 per cent against 38 per cent. Poor attendance, temporary exclusion or participation in unstable, casual, unskilled work declined from 18 per cent to 12 per cent. Regular use or dependency upon soft drugs and alcohol declined from 18 per cent to 16 per cent, while regular use or dependence on hard drugs dropped from 7 per cent to 1 per cent. Positive contact with families grew from 25 per cent to 30 per cent and those estranged from their families, 'looked after' or leaving care fell from 12 per cent to 3 per cent. The numbers of young people referring themselves to statutory welfare agencies over the period increased from 4 per cent to 15 per cent.

This data suggests that street-based youth work had a positive impact upon the lives of the majority of the socially excluded subjects of our investigation.

Who is street-based youth work not reaching?

Some young people are unlikely to be reached via street-based youth work. In the average project only 37 per cent of contacts are young women. A few projects (1.7 per cent) work with no young women and a few (1.5 per cent) work only with young women. It has been suggested that young women are less visible on the streets than young men, especially in single sex groups *(Spence, 1990; Pearce and Stanko, 2000; Skelton, 2000)* and this was confirmed by the observations of the researchers during project visits. In one project, 'street-based' workers sometimes visited young women in their homes or contacted them via mobile phones to overcome this problem. In this sense, the notion of 'street-based' work is a misnomer. It was also evident that boys and young men tended to make greater demands on workers than young women. Thus, in mixed groups there is sometimes a tendency for the needs of young women to be overlooked by workers attempting to respond to the more strident demands of young men.

This gender imbalance in the work tends to be compounded by targeted initiatives which focus upon school exclusion, crime and disorder where boys are heavily over-represented. The few projects which focus exclusively upon young women tend to deal with problems

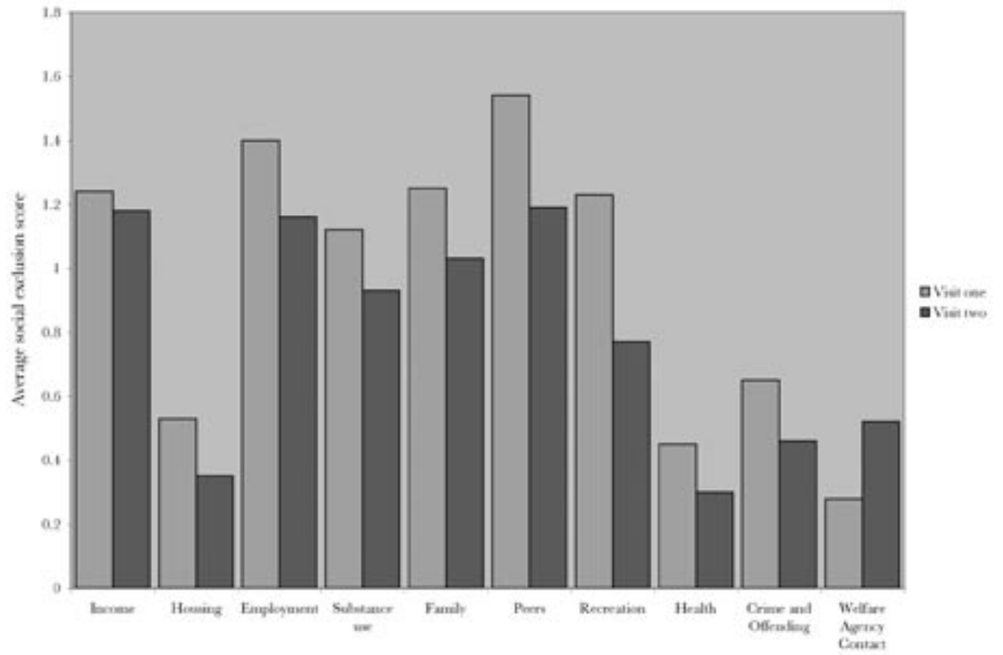
of female sexuality, focusing on sexual health and sexual exploitation through prostitution. Although male youth workers do work with young women, women workers tend to carry responsibility for dealing with 'female issues'. It may be that new modes of working may need to be developed if street-based youth work is to engage effectively with young women *(NYB, 1983; Batsleer, 1996; Spence, 1996,1999).*

Some young people of Asian and African origin may also avoid congregating on the street for cultural reasons or because of the threat posed to them by others. In several instances it appeared that these youngsters were unwilling to use either existing mainstream youth provision or that provided within their own religious or ethnic communities. The Asian manager of one project working with Asian young people spoke of a 'generation gap' in his community. Workers targeting Somali young people decided to open a specialist but independent building-based project.

In the projects surveyed, 3 per cent of young people contacted were identified as disabled. The survey did not ask respondents to specify the nature of such disability. This low figure suggests that those young people with severe physical or psychiatric disabilities or serious learning difficulties are seldom reached by street-based youth work.

Neither did the present research reveal any targeted intervention with gay and lesbian young people, although street-based youth work with these groups does exist. It is possible that workers do not make their involvement with gay and lesbian young people explicit *(Valentine, Skelton and Butler, 2002)*, yet if their needs are to be met it may be necessary to develop the potential of existing street-based methods and devise other, complementary approaches *(Henry and McArdle, 2003)*.

Figure 4.6 Average social exclusion scores at visits one and two



5 The re-configured field of street-based youth work

> The organisation, a local charity, has been running for six years. Currently it has more than 20 short- to medium-term funding streams. Street-based work is one part of its provision for young people in the area. Sessions are undertaken on the streets and also in local schools and Pupil Referral Units. One-to-one advocacy and support work is undertaken in a drop-in facility which is also used by partner agencies. The organisation runs summer activity programmes and other projects. It has recently accepted a contract for an Intensive Support and Surveillance Project, and has expanded street-based youth work and drop-in provision in adjacent neighbourhoods.

The continuing struggle over what street-based youth work should be called is powered in large part by a desire on the part of some protagonists to defend a 'purist' model of detached youth work *(Kaufmann, 2001)*. In this model, the work is open-ended, conducted on the young person's territory, the relationship between the worker and the young person is voluntary, the 'contract' between them is negotiated and the thrust of the work is 'emancipatory' not 'correctional' *(Factor and Pitts, 2001)*. However, as we have noted, the recent period has seen:

a. The rise of target- or outcome-driven interventions supported by diverse, time-limited, funding streams.
b. A shift of focus from 'universal', area-based, work towards more tightly targeted, problem-oriented, issue-based work.
c. The diversification of the agencies and professionals utilising street-based youth work and the growing significance of work sponsored by community safety and youth justice agencies.
d. The diversification of methods (outreach, detached, building-based, vehicle-based, project work and drop-in) and their differential use in response to the changing needs of the young people, the changing priorities of projects and the changing requirements of funders.
e. The consequent erosion of the distinctiveness of 'detached' and 'outreach' youth work.

These changes have rendered earlier distinctions somewhat redundant and blurred pre-existing professional and ethical boundaries. We have, therefore, adopted the term 'street-based youth work' to represent the diversity of this reconfigured field and, in order to identify its key characteristics, we have focused upon:

a. The targeting of street work.
b. The street-work relationship: compulsion, pressure and voluntarism.
c. The focus of street work: the individual, the group and the network.
d. The content of street-work: prescription and negotiation.
e. The locus of street-work: the street and the room.

Targeting

All projects target their work. This targeting may be based on particular neighbourhoods, particular issues or particular groups or sub-groups of young people. In Chapter 2, drawing upon data from our national survey of 564 projects, we noted a marked shift in emphasis away from 'area-based' work towards 'issue-based' work between 1999 and 2002. These changes appear to be a product of the changed funding regimes identified above and discussed in the next chapter. It was, therefore, pertinent to discover how, in 2002, projects were setting about the task of targeting their services.

In the 31 telephone interviews, respondents were asked how they prioritised or targeted their work and this was explored in greater depth during the 11 project visits and workshops. Their responses suggested four major modes of targeting:

a. **Area-based (universal):** 30 per cent of the 31 projects were area-based. Area-based work approximates most closely to a purist model of detached youth work and endeavours to offer a service to all young people within a specified age group within a geographically demarcated area (a housing estate/ward/council district etc). Most are located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and are often provided or supported by the local authority Youth Service in areas where there is no other youth provision. As we note in Chapter 2, since 1999, such 'purist', 'area-based' street work appears to have declined by over 40 per cent whereas 'area and issue-based' projects have grown from 19.5 to 60.7 per cent of provision. Some of this apparent decline in area-based work is due to street projects acquiring premises and becoming clubs or 'centres', however.

b. **Broadly defined 'at risk' groups:** In attempting to specify their target groups, 36 per cent of respondents used phrases like 'excluded young people', 'the difficult ones', 'young people most in need', 'those most at risk', or those 'on the fringes'. However, as *France and Wiles (1996)* point out, although defining and targeting high risk groups is difficult, without a precise definition of the risk to be addressed, evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention is problematic. Lack of precision can also foster 'mission-drift' wherein, simply by dint of being out on the street, young people can come to be defined by workers as 'hard to reach'.

c. **Issue-based I, specified 'at risk' groups :** 27 per cent of projects target specified groups of higher need/risk young people who pose some sort of threat, are at risk or have particular difficulties in the areas of sexual health, pregnancy, racial conflict, drug abuse, homelessness, mental health, family relationships or crime and disorder. Projects with a community safety brief, for example, will tend to target young people perceived by community representatives, local politicians, the police and other members of multi-agency partnerships to be causing a nuisance to local residents.

d. **Issue-based II, specified 'at risk' individuals:** Only 6 per cent of projects targeted individuals. YIPs or ISSPs target identified young people who are subject to statutory supervision or whose social predicament and/or past and present behaviour suggest that they are, or are likely to become, involved in crime, disorder or anti-social behaviour.

However, in reality, targeting is more complex than this categorisation suggests. Area-based projects may respond to identified 'hot spots' where young people are annoying neighbours or prioritise work with particular groups of young people who are causing them concern, like glue-sniffers. They may also focus upon particular issues at particular times, such as sexual health, if this appears to be a problem in the neighbourhood. An 'issues-based' YIP, which targets identified individuals at serious risk of offending will also work with their friendship group while endeavouring to enhance generic youth provision in the area. Moreover, changing problems, fluctuating resources, safe parking for the vehicle if they use one, links with other relevant services and a variety of other local contingencies will all shape the evolving priorities and targeting of projects

The street-work relationship – compulsion, pressure and voluntarism

Eighty-one per cent of respondents in the national survey characterised their relationship with young people as purely voluntary. Indeed many were somewhat perplexed by the question, wondering how else one might develop effective work with young people. It is only in projects like ISSPs, for example, where young people are required to meet workers as a condition of their court order, or risk being returned to court for re-sentencing, that an element of compulsion is clearly evident. However, where projects are working with other agencies an element of compulsion can sometimes enter the relationship. If, for example, a young person 'in trouble' at school is referred by school staff to a programme run by a youth worker on school premises, the youngster may not view such participation as purely voluntary *(Luxmore, 2000; Hazler, 1998)*. Constraint or pressure, as distinct from compulsion, is harder to detect and where projects act as gatekeepers of valued resources they could conceivably exert such pressure. In project visits, it was clear that workers sometimes utilised incentives and rewards to encourage young people to participate in activities but there was no evidence of workers withholding or withdrawing resources, or themselves, from young people as a sanction. Street work can, and does, contribute to the control of young people, but such control appears to be rooted in a relationship of mutual trust and respect developed over time. Building these relationships, particularly with high need/risk young people can take a considerable time. There is an obvious tension here between this sometimes tortuous relationship-building process and the potentially more coercive and confrontational 'fire-fighting' role which workers are sometimes required to play by their agency, programme partners or funders. There appears to be a need for greater clarity on the part of funders or agency partners about the nature and degree of control that street workers can exert over young people and the timescales for its achievement.

The focus of street work – the individual, the group and the networks

Twenty-nine per cent of projects surveyed undertook only groupwork, while only 10 per cent focused exclusively on individuals. However, individual work often arises only after prolonged contact with a group because most young people are only prepared to approach workers for individual help when they have developed a relationship of trust within the group. All projects worked with adolescent networks, many of whose members were known to projects, although others were not.

Adolescent networks serve as communication systems and are vital if workers want to 'put the word out' about a new opportunity, like a bike project or an informal educational resource for school-excluded youngsters, or a new threat, like the appearance in the neighbourhood of potentially harmful drugs from a suspect source. Networks also serve as important influence systems and the worker may sometimes use them as a way of building peer support, to help young people resist drugs or limit their alcohol intake, for example. It was evident from the 11 project visits that young people on the street do not necessarily cluster together on the basis of the nature or intensity of their problems. Low need/risk youngsters commonly associate with those with high need/risk. As a result, if the worker wishes to contact a young person at high need/risk, they will often need to work, in the first instance at least, with his or her peers who are at lesser need/risk. Indeed, as the Wincroft Youth Project *(Smith et al, 1972)* and North American studies have shown *(cf Yablonsky, 1962; Spergel,1966)*, sometimes, only by working successfully with such lower need/risk young people will the worker gain sufficient credibility in the eyes of the higher need/risk young person for contact to be possible. This would suggest that an intervention which targets the network, then the peer group and only then the individual may sometimes be the most effective strategy for reaching very troubled and troubling young people. Indeed, if one of the goals of intervention is to reduce stigma and 'normalise' the high need/risk young person's situation, promoting contact with 'pro-social peers' would suggest itself as one of the foci of the intervention. Beyond this is the reality that the nature and intensity of the needs and risks to which young people are subject will vary over time. Thus, the job of the worker may be to retain continuing contact in order to minimise the impact of recurrent crises in the lives of young people who are usually functioning adequately in a high-risk situation.

The content of street work – prescription and negotiation

Respondents were asked whether, or to what extent, the content of the work undertaken is negotiated with the young person or prescribed by the project or the worker. On the face of it, in work such as sexual health information programmes or with young people subject to an ISSP, a specific 'curriculum' would appear to be prescribed by the funding body and the agency delivering the service or programme. Such prescription stands in contrast with 'purist' models of detached youth work, in which the roles to be played and the work to be undertaken is supposed to emerge from a dialogue between the worker and the young person. However, while 77 per cent of the 31 projects participating in the telephone interviews maintained that all their work was negotiated with young people, the other 23 per cent said that they introduced some curriculum elements into the work. In reality, many of the problems experienced by young people are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. As a result, it is difficult, and may also be unproductive, for the worker to focus upon a single issue or problem. It would appear to follow that some consolidation or rationalisation of the plurality of single-issue funding streams currently supporting targeted street-based work might be necessary if workers are to be supported to deal with the complex realities which confront them out on the street.

The locus of street work – the street and the room

Traditionally, the locus of street work has varied between projects which operated only on the 'street' and those in which workers ventured onto the street primarily to deliver

information about a service or activity or to attract young people back into their premises. Today, it is a minority of projects which work only on the street. The majority operate across a range of settings apart from the street such as shopping malls, schools, school playgrounds, leisure centres and health centres *(Firmstone, 1998a; Dunlop, 1985; Hand, 1995).* Some workers, like those endeavouring to contact young women and those employed by YIPs, will often visit young people's own homes in order to establish and maintain contact. As issue-based work has grown, street projects have had to diversify, begging, borrowing and occasionally buying premises in which to undertake follow-up work with individual young people in need and in trouble. In this reconfigured field, street work requires a different and more elaborate infrastructure to support the diverse tasks it is now required to undertake.

6 Sustaining street-based youth work

> The project was undertaking short-term outreach work from a bus. The facility was in high demand and evaluations of the project showed it was successful in achieving its targets. Then the bus failed its MOT requiring a substantial investment to get it back on the road. As the bus was borrowed from another organisation, the project had no say about whether or not the repairs could be undertaken. The future of the project now looks shaky. Both the coordinator and worker posts are vacant and the lack of the bus means that, although there is core funding for the project, it will not be able to continue.

As we have noted, since the late 1990s street-based youth work has become a key element in a broad range of Government social and criminal justice initiatives. However, in the eight to ten months between the first and second telephone interviews, 22 per cent of the 31 projects had ceased doing street-based youth work, a further 8 per cent were under threat and the research team was unable to re-establish contact with a further five projects (16 per cent). Some street-based youth work is intentionally time-limited, and this was the case in 11 per cent of the projects which ceased operation. However, the other, non-local authority Youth Service projects were designed to continue and their demise was usually triggered by the interplay of a number of factors, as the story about the bus at the beginning of this chapter suggests. This chapter draws upon the 31 telephone interviews and the experiences of workers and managers in the 11 projects visited to explore the sustainability of street-based youth work.

The funding lottery

Few projects are funded indefinitely and those that are tend to be supported by the local authority Youth Service and are fairly small. The majority of projects undertaking long-term work are dependent upon short-term funding:

> The project relies on short-term funding, but is committed to maintaining the work long term in the area, and will remain there as long as they can access funding. Initially the project was funded for three years. One of the objectives for year two was to have the next funders in place beyond the original funding deadline. It comes back to long-term needs and short-term funding.

If a project can keep running it can establish solid relationships with young people, plug into local youth networks, help build community capacity and support successive cohorts through the hazards of adolescence and on to independence. However, this requires agencies to be perpetually involved in fundraising in order to stay afloat. Fundraising is difficult and time-consuming, not least because, in the new quasi-market in Youth Services, viability often requires projects to put together a complex portfolio of funding streams to ensure continuity. In this environment, lack of success in a major bid may call into question the viability of the whole project, leading other potential funders to withhold their support.

Time-limited funding tends to favour those with sufficient managerial capacity and familiarity with the quasi-market environment to evaluate and re-design projects, to recruit, transfer or train staff, to establish or replicate procedures and protocols and to start work quickly. The economies of scale achieved by such projects or organisations mean that they are able to generate sufficient surplus income to cover their core costs, a problem that continually dogs smaller projects and organisations. Larger projects are better able to withstand the loss of one or two funding streams and this creates the conditions for continuity of client contact and worker employment.

At the other end of the scale are the 'losers', usually one- or two-night a week neighbourhood projects run by local adults attempting to make provision for local young people. These groups tend to be far less successful in the funding lottery.

> When you apply for big pots of money they don't take you seriously because you're just the part-time detached youth project and they don't really want to invest in those kids. They just want to get their money spent and their targets achieved.

This is, at least, ironic since it is these projects which most fully exemplify the community participation and local 'capacity building' that the Government is striving to promote through its youth initiatives. It is evident that the communitarian element in such endeavours is in tension with the realities of the new quasi-market in funding. Even where smaller projects successfully re-badge to take advantage of new funding streams, this may be at the expense of continuity since this new work sometimes has to be re-directed towards a different group of young people. Project continuity may, therefore, be achieved at the expense of continuity of contact with vulnerable young people.

When a project is nearing the end of its work with one cohort of young people and beginning to reconnoitre its catchment area to identify new targets for intervention, there may be a lull in which contact levels drop. This presents a serious problem for projects evaluated predominately on the basis of contact levels and throughput.

Staffing

Short-term funding tends to lead to problems of staff retention. As the telephone interviews indicated, the vagaries of the quasi-market in issue-based work with young people have led to a high degree of transience in the workforce. In a situation of financial uncertainty, smaller projects will often try to ensure cash-flow by avoiding long-term staffing commitments. Thus, three-quarters of the workers in the projects surveyed were either volunteers or part-time, sessional workers. When a project is coming near to the end of its funding, staff begin looking for other jobs and this can leave the project with time to run, no staff to undertake the work, and little chance of making new appointments in the time remaining.

> The worker got a new job, she became a Connexions PA. At this point the project stopped running, due to lack of staff. The financial resources are still there, however, there is nobody in post.

As far as this respondent was aware, the post had not been advertised, and she could not say when the project would begin again.

Two projects surveyed which were under threat were exploring the option of creating 'rapid response teams', which would react to reports of groups of 'young people hanging around'. Where projects have a large area to cover, with limited resources, some undertake a rolling programme of short-term interventions. While focused short-term interventions enable projects to offer some provision where none exists, there is little evidence that short-term work with high need/risk young people is particularly effective.

Changing priorities

Flexibility in responding to changing neighbourhood needs may presage a planned shift away from street-based youth work. Where a project is the only youth provision in an area, sponsoring agencies may reduce or terminate street-based youth work in the process of consolidating provision within newly available buildings.

> The project has recently secured funding for a large base in the area. There is no other youth provision on the estate and the young people and community have expressed a need for this. As the project has limited staffing (three full-time workers) the work in the immediate future will focus around the new building, as well as continuing drop-in provision in other buildings/ agencies in the area, and so detached/outreach provision will need to be reduced.

Such shifts may endeavour to take account of the need/risks of the young people in contact with the project but, in a situation of scarce resources, they are driven by the need to ensure adequate staffing for new premises. If, on the other hand, projects with both building-based and street-based provision are under financial pressure or short of staff, street-based youth work is often the first and easiest area to cut back. This can then create the problem that if harder to reach, or more challenging, young people fail to use the building-based provision, or breach its rules and are excluded from it, there will be no other provision available to them.

Somewhat paradoxically, success in securing funding may also lead to a reduction in the amount of street-based youth work undertaken by a project. The rapid expansion of one of the larger projects studied by the research team had been paralleled by both a proportionate and an actual reduction in resources committed to street-based youth work with groups, in favour of building-based work with referred individuals. This is due in part to the fact that the targets and performance indicators attendant upon many of the new funding streams are more easily and cost-effectively achieved within four walls than out on the street. Thus, being a 'winner' in the quasi-market appears to offer no guarantees for the continuity of street-based youth work.

The difficulty of the work

One project, funded to undertake street-based work with hard to reach young people, was discontinued because managers believed the staff were avoiding the confrontational youngsters initially targeted by the project, working instead with those who were more approachable and responsive.

> You need very experienced workers and we didn't have them.

This project now endeavours to reach its target group via referrals from the Police, the Education Welfare Service, the YOT, peer recommendation and word of mouth.

Factors making for continuity

Projects that continue over time tend to have managers with a realistic grasp of the potential of street-based work and its ability to articulate with other forms of provision and intervention, established connections into local interagency and professional networks and well-developed fundraising skills. Beyond this, it is evident that continuity is predicated on the commitment of the agency and the professionals within it to provide street-based work alongside other provision, even when there are competing pressures on time and resources. This commitment is not necessarily informed by evidence of the greater efficacy of this form of work in meeting the agency's goals, however.

In order to overcome the uncertainties engendered by short-term funding some projects bid for medium-term funding with a clear exit strategy.

> The project was funded by a three-year funding stream. From the outset the project had a clearly identified exit strategy. As the funding ends shortly, the team have been working through their exit strategy for this area, aiming to leave the young people in the area in a position where they are able to meet their own needs.

However, time-limited projects can find themselves in difficulty if, as is sometimes the case in work with high need/risk young people, it takes longer than anticipated to get started. Building relationships and gaining trust may take a year or more and yet, in a three-year project, workers will be turning their attention to their exit strategy part-way through year two. Moreover, if there are few other resources in the area, or if other services are operating on similar timescales, the exit strategy may no longer be feasible and it can then be very difficult to leave behind a positive legacy once funding has ceased.

7 Accountability: Monitoring and evaluating street-based youth work

Jack has known the project workers since he was 14. He is an intelligent, articulate and apparently confident young man who from the very start has sought to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the project. These have included participation in activities, events and trips. However, Jack has serious family problems which have had an impact upon both his behaviour and his attendance at school. He has sought out workers for lengthy conversations about these problems. These conversations were eventually organised into more formal counselling sessions with a worker who was trained in youth counselling and shared Jack's interest in sport. Building on Jack's interest in football, the project was able to get him to assume more responsibility for himself and his actions. One of the ways they did this was by encouraging and supporting him to run the project's football team. This appears to have enabled Jack to curb his aggressive behaviour and improve his school attendance. The project has also liaised with the school's learning mentor and together they have supported Jack through his GCSEs. Although everybody, including Jack, agrees that his grades might have been much better had he done his homework, the experience of achieving the grades he did, has motivated him and helped him focus upon his plans for the future. Jack has recently started a full-time college course and he now has a part-time job, for which the project provided a reference.

> Although most of Jack's friends are out of school for much of the time and involved in low level crime and disorder, Jack has so far managed to steer clear of trouble.

The demand for detailed monitoring, evaluation and outcome data in interventions with socially excluded young people reflects governmental concern that such intervention should be 'evidence-based' and represent 'best value'. From its inception, street-based youth work in the UK has been concerned to measure its impact. If we contrast the Wincroft Youth Project, arguably the best example of a rigorously monitored and researched street-based youth work project in the UK *(Smith et al, 1972)*, with contemporary interventions, however, it is not the presence or otherwise of robust measures of impact which distinguish them, but the centrality of tightly specified 'targets' and 'outcomes' and the pressures upon projects and professionals to meet them *(Jeffs and Smith, forthcoming)*. Many projects surveyed are concerned about the tension between the forms of recording they undertake as part and parcel of their normal work and the complex and detailed monitoring requirements of funders and programme partners. These pressures are multiplied when projects are reliant upon a plurality of time-limited funding streams for their survival:

> We call ourselves 'the evaluation project', we're constantly being evaluated. Every bit of funding we have they normally send in evaluators.

In the preceding six years this project had been scrutinised by five sets of external evaluators, each evaluation relating to a discrete aspect of the work. Not only is there a concern that the sheer weight of the monitoring and evaluation load is diverting resources

from the face-to-face work, but also that some outcome measures, designed to achieve 'best value', tend to work against 'best practice'.

> There is an issue around numbers, if you need to reach a certain number of clients, you may select the easier to work with young people. If funders truly want projects to work with the 'hard to reach' they need to set very low target numbers. It would be more helpful to abandon 'front ended contact targets' and instead look at process-based targets and results. In accountancy terms 'value for money' is represented by the number of youth work contacts, divided by the number of hours, but this doesn't fit well with reaching the 'hard to reach'.

Recording can also be expensive. In response to growing demand for data, several projects have computerised their records on the young people with whom they are in contact and employ staff to input this material. One project calculated that the codification of the data produced by each session consumes one hour of secretarial time. While acknowledging that this might be justified in terms of enhanced quality of service, the manager said that the main reason for incurring the expense was to 'convince people that we are worth investing in'. Another is intending in the near future to appoint a full-time evaluation worker to monitor work, produce bids and reports to funders and coordinate the management of the mounting volume of data demanded by funders. In one tightly-targeted project, a significant proportion of the agency's funding has been allocated specifically for the purpose of paying external evaluators.

The difficulties of evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating street-based youth work is intrinsically difficult. Workers find keeping relevant statistics of contacts and activities reasonably straightforward but wrestle with qualitative aspects of evaluation. Measuring outcomes for individual young people is difficult partly because, as noted in Chapter 5, it is in the nature of the work that the bulk of the data collected relates to groups. Moreover, 'developmental' interventions, designed to help young people grow to maturity, may take several years to bear fruit and are, therefore, particularly difficult to evaluate. Street-based youth work does not occur in a vacuum and separating out the precise impact of a specific intervention from other changes in a young person's life, and other influences upon their behaviour, would pose a formidable challenge to professional researchers.

> There are always other factors at work in young people's lives. You may do good work which may not result in a positive outcome because of other factors, but it doesn't stop the work you did being good.

Moreover, gathering the kinds of information upon which such an assessment of personal development can be made is a sensitive process and professional discretion and ethics sometimes dictate that certain questions are best left unasked. There is a particular problem about gathering initial data for a 'distance travelled' assessment since, in the early stages of an intervention, attempts to elicit certain types of information would probably be regarded as intrusive by the young person and this could threaten the emerging relationship.

Sometimes, the impact of a youth work intervention may not be felt for a considerable time. Sometimes, young people will only act upon the advice of a worker several years after the encounter in which the advice was given *(Williamson, 1995)*. At others, as we discuss in Chapter 5, a worker's 'input' to a young people's network may have an impact upon young people who are unknown to them. Beyond this is the perennial problem confronted by researchers of preventive social intervention that, as one of the telephone respondents observed:

> It is very difficult to measure what you've prevented.

A further problem raised by some respondents was that some funders and employing agencies, having failed to understand the nature of street-based youth work, impose inappropriate evaluation criteria and frameworks. One manager explained that workers were obliged to complete:

> … evaluation sheets that are geared towards centre-based work … that don't really reflect the nature of detached work.

Some evaluations require details such as the date of birth and address of young people 'worked with'. Such information might easily be secured in a club setting but, as one worker observed, this is information 'you would only get as time goes by and might take three or four months'. Another worker believed that young people would find it intrusive to be asked 'could you tell me what your ethnic identity is?'

Some requests for monitoring and evaluation data appear to be excessive. One manager complained that having to:

> … churn out figures on a monthly basis … really detracts from the actual work and stops practitioners being out there doing the work they're good at.

Unwarranted demands can be counter-productive, resulting in front-line workers viewing 'recording' as a matter of 'just ticking boxes' to satisfy managers and distant, often temporary, funders. In a few cases, workers admitted making up the numbers to satisfy the monitoring requirements. One explained, only half-jokingly, 'If I see them, down they go as a "contact".'

In the telephone interviews and project visits it was evident that many managers were endeavouring to protect face-to-face workers from what they regarded as unreasonable demands for monitoring data and record-keeping.

> I know some colleagues who have got very hot under the collar about increases in recording and data collection and have passed that down to part-time staff who just turned round and said 'Well I didn't come into youth work to do that so sod it! I'm off'. I've not done that. So you know if I was Ofsted-ed, I might be criticised for some of my paperwork, but I'd rather protect my staff from the worst aspects of (data collection) and keep them delivering good quality youth work, even if I can't prove it, than have no staff and the best paperwork in the world.

How projects monitor

Leaving to one side the monitoring requirements of external funders, most projects undertake two main forms of monitoring:

a. Regular individual and team supervision to ensure that the work is 'on course' in terms of project aims and current objectives.
b. An internal review of case and group recordings and workers' assessments of movement over time.

In addition, some undertake:

c. Interviews with neighbouring and partner agencies and residents' groups to evaluate local impact.
d. External, often university-based, evaluations drawing upon project data and observation to assess progress vis-à-vis project aims and individual, group and neighbourhood impact.

As *Carole Pugh (2003)* has observed, these evaluation methods, which are similar in many ways to those utilised by the best evaluated projects in the field, tend to be viewed by practitioners as supportive of effective practice rather than a drain upon it *(Goetschius and Tash, 1967; Smith, Farrant and Marchant, 1972).*

The problems of monitoring and evaluation

A key problem is the discrepancy between the forms of monitoring and evaluation which appear to flow logically from an attempt to ensure good and effective face-to-face practice, and the growing demands from funders for complex data which does not. As suggested in Chapter 6, while larger, better-resourced, projects are able to cope with the growing demand for data, the viability of some smaller, locally supported projects may be jeopardised. However, as is the case in other public service areas, attention is now turning to ways in which these problems might be addressed. In street-based youth work there appears to be a need for some integration of funding streams and a rationalisation of their data requirements. It is also evident that if smaller projects are to be sustained in this new fiscal environment, they will need access to a local resource that can support them in their quest for funding and in meeting the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements of funders. It may also be the case that closer and more structured involvement of street-based youth workers in the development of evaluation criteria and inspection regimes would go some way to reducing the deleterious effects of evaluation overload.

8 Education, training and work and street-based youth work

At the outset, Jamie's contact with the project was quite casual. He was first contacted during an outreach session, and afterwards tagged along with friends who were seeking help with job hunting. Gradually the outreach worker engaged him in conversation on the street and in the centre, and over a two month period Jamie revealed a difficult family situation. His older brother was a serious drug user, his younger brother was disabled and Jamie lived intermittently with his 'Nan' and with his mother. As his relationship with the project developed, he agreed to a formal assessment of his support needs. This resulted in an application for an apprenticeship with a local firm and a housing application to a Foyer. Jamie was given help in completing these applications. Although he was successful in obtaining the apprenticeship, he claimed that the terms of employment required a period of work without pay. Rather than do this, he got himself a casual labouring job and enrolled in a college course. Meanwhile there was no response from the Foyer. Ten months after his initial contact with the project, Jamie rang to say that he had been sleeping on floors for a few months and was finding it difficult to continue with his college course. This time, the project was able to find him Foyer accommodation in an adjacent area. Once housed, contact with him lessened again. However, when his 'Nan' died he visited the project and workers were able to refer him to a bereavement counsellor. Jamie now lives in the Foyer and has a job with his older brother. He is seen only rarely by the workers.

Street-based youth work and education, training and employment

This chapter is based upon data about the involvement of street-based youth workers in education, training and work, and their relationship with Connexions, derived from the 31 telephone interviews and the 11 project visits. Most projects offer active support to young people not in education, training and work although many felt that this often went unrecognised by other agencies. One project manager gave the example of a worker who, as a result of his persistence over weeks and months, had persuaded several young people, who had initially rejected this option out of hand, to join a local 'life skills' programme.

> We need to start keeping records of what we are contributing … ongoing support is hidden.

Street-based youth workers are often the 'first port of call' for hard to reach, disaffiliated, young people. An analysis of the ten-point social exclusion inventory indicated that only 26 per cent of young people not in education, training or work with whom projects were working, were in touch with any other youth-serving agency.

Some workers spoke about enabling young people to make choices about their lives, encouraging them to draw their own conclusions about the effects of poor education and a lack of skills and knowledge by considering the predicament of some adults in their communities.

Often, the help offered by street-based workers is very practical. Thus, young people who are geographically isolated from existing opportunities are helped to find ways of getting to the available jobs, college courses or training programmes.

> There are very limited opportunities for them within the town; perhaps a couple of dead-end jobs at the factories, but it's very difficult to get anything other than that. We work on getting them driving lessons and helping them save up for a car, because once they have that they can gain access to the outside world.

Several projects run 'life skills' or informal education programmes cultivating the skills required for employment, further education or training:

> Three residentials every year with young people are specifically based around education, training and employment. This means we go away with up to 35 young people to a residential centre, and from Friday to Sunday afternoon we spend time in workshops, helping young people to fill in application forms, write letters of application for jobs, go through mock interviews, being the interviewer and then the interviewee. We also look at agencies which can help young people enter careers and colleges.

Another project has a similarly structured approach to the issues.

> We have done writing CVs and applications and supported them through the interviews. In the past I've liaised between a young person and their workplace, where they've had disciplinary problems. We've provided references for young people, based on their involvement with the projects, attended recruitment fairs to get information for young people about the expectations of employers and communicated with employers about what the young people are like and how they can best be helped to succeed.

Some projects provide certificated training programmes for young people and opportunities for skills development through voluntary work.

> We've provided some of the training ourselves; the peer education project, for example. That's a course with a certificate at the end of it. Some of them have done voluntary work with us here at the project and we also offer placements for young people if they're interested in a career in youth work.

Liaison with, and referral to, other agencies in the areas of social skills development, education, training and work is for some workers a key responsibility.

> Initially, we'll involve them in activities as a way of building relationships with them, and then getting them to look at what interests them. Then, we may contact the Careers Service and set up interviews or, if they've a particular interest in, for example, adventure training and work in the outdoors, we'll contact The Prince's Trust. But it's mainly about looking at what their needs are and linking them into the right provision and the right opportunities.

While most projects do not provide a job-creation service, there are some notable exceptions. One project arranges work experience placements in local garages, linking young people into a motor mechanics training programme at a local FE college. Another has developed a construction scheme in collaboration with a consortium of small local building firms. The project is able to pay for a dedicated employment and training worker from the proceeds.

> Three or four years ago we got 15 into employment. The following year 32, last year 42 and this year we got 55 young people into work. We have probably got a third of our clients into work, and bearing in mind a lot of them would be under 16, we've also got 15 into training, working with other agencies.

The pace of change

It is evident that in most cases, a great deal of work needs to be undertaken with socially excluded young people before links into education, training and work can be established:

> Trying to actually get them onto the college site was a big barrier ... it takes a lot of support and I think there is a lot of support still required.

> It can take upwards to a year, realistically, because you're taking on someone who has a hopeless view of the future and really rudimentary social skills. They've probably been excluded from school; probably been in trouble with the Police; hate authority; can't communicate effectively. So we're working with them, trying to improve those skills, using things like outdoor pursuits and residentials; things that require team work; joint problem-solving. These are ideal ways to develop those skills initially. And those skills are often transferable and you can build on them, and get commitment from the young people, get them involved in their own projects and planning a trip away, that sort of thing. But it can take a long, long time.

There is a recognition that to encourage young people to move forward, a range of approaches is required *(Crimmens and Whalen, 1999)* and that youth workers should provide for personal as well as skills development. Respondents maintained that, in this type of work, building a young person's self-confidence through the effective use of the professional relationship is a crucial pre-requisite of success.

> Sometimes it's the first time in their lives they've done anything good and gained praise for it. So it's about building up their self-esteem; building up their social skills; getting them to see that they are a 'somebody', and a somebody with a future, before you can start talking about education and training.

Not only, but also ...

It is evident that when young people first meet street-based workers, education or training is seldom their most pressing problem.

> Accessing education, employment and training opportunities may be a long way off for young people who have issues with substance misuse, which combine with housing issues to put them at very high risk.

One respondent, a Connexions PA, is working on the streets as a drugs specialist. She has contact with groups of young people using drugs. She sees her role as building purposeful relationships with them as a means of working towards harm reduction in the first instance. She does not feel under pressure to push education, training and employment and tends to deal with these issues if, and when, the young people express an interest. She

has adopted a 'first things first' strategy, aiming to stabilise the young people's situation by concentrating on health and housing, recognising that only when an element of stability has entered their lives will there be space for these other concerns. When she believes they are ready, she refers them on to a PA with a careers specialism.

While other professionals also base their work upon the development of trusting and purposeful relationships with their clients, youth work's open-ended commitment to responsiveness to the needs of young people in informal settings may mean these workers are best placed to respond to the personal and environmental deficits that can prevent hard to reach young people fulfilling their potential through education, training and work.

Connexions: A cool reception

As we note in Chapter 1, there appears to be a lack of clarity in the field about the precise role and purpose of Connexions, and this was reflected in most of the telephone interviews and on project visits. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that at the point we undertook the fieldwork (2002), the Connexions pilots were still in operation and few Connexions Partnerships were fully operational.

However, it was also apparent that some, at least, of the concerns expressed flowed from existing animosities which some street-based workers felt towards the Careers Service. However, the criticisms and confusions of street-based youth workers were similar despite the fact that they came from all parts of the country and were involved with Connexions Partnerships and services at different stages in their development. The wealth of explanatory literature notwithstanding, the key messages about Connexions do not appear to be getting through to workers on the streets, and this is unfortunate since it seems likely that some, at least, of the anxieties and criticisms we encountered could be answered if they possessed accurate information.

Most workers interviewed on project visits said that, because they are committed to flexibility and negotiation in their dealings with young people, they viewed with some apprehension the apparent emphasis in both Connexions and *Transforming Youth Work (DfES, 2002)* on the achievement of narrowly defined outcomes and the requirement to 'track', and share information concerning the whereabouts and personal disposition of service-users *(Smith, 2003)*. Asked if they would 'track' young people for Connexions, several workers anticipated resistance from youth workers, although some said they were prepared to act as 'in-betweeners' or 'brokers'. One explained that if asked for information on an individual by a PA they would be:

> … completely honest (with the young person) (I would) say that I've heard your name's come up (but) it would depend how well I knew the young person. If I knew them well then I'd judge it – it's really difficult to say because it depends on who it is. But if I knew them really well I'd tell them that they'd missed a couple of appointments, or whatever, and find out why … and try and give them the support to get there if they wanted to – or to have the courage to go in and say they weren't interested.

Another was less equivocal:

> We'll get involved with anything that benefits young people. If it doesn't … and it's not on a voluntary basis, then we won't.

Many are worried that involvement with Connexions could not only undermine youth work's voluntary principle but involve youth workers in the imposition of sanctions, although it was unclear what these might be:

> If it does develop into a compulsory thing, that will change everything for us ... we've seen New Deal develop more and more into 'you will do this, you will do that'.

Although Connexions is welcomed by some as an additional resource, others fear that what they hold to be its target-driven ethos might colonise and sideline developmental work. One manager observed that the arrival of Connexions means that 'detached work' as she knew it 'will probably cease within a few years', to be replaced by narrowly focused 'project work'. Critics also expressed fear that the sheer spending power of Connexions might eventually dictate patterns of service delivery and reduce the choices available to young people.

> Connexions, by providing funding with strings, is creating a monopoly in services for young people. Where will they go for choice if voluntary organisations, as well as statutory organisations are all 'badged up'?

Working with Connexions

However, these anxieties were sometimes leavened with pragmatism:

> A lot of youth work is going to have a Connexions element to it and a percentage of Youth Service staff are likely to become involved as PAs, because that's written into the Connexions development plan. But because we are a charity and involved with the Youth Service, I think we have some protection. I don't think our project is going to be swallowed up as much as others.

As we noted in Chapter 1, the Connexions Service National Unit *(DfES, 2002)* identifies four models of the relationship between Connexions PAs and youth workers.

- Youth workers become PAs in their own professional setting.
- Youth workers become PAs in a multi-agency Connexions team.
- PAs are placed in existing Youth Service settings.
- PAs deliver specialist support alongside youth workers.

It appears that the latter two models were the main ones operating in street-based youth work during the time the field work for this project was undertaken. In projects where staff spoke most positively about Connexions, the PA tended to be integrated into the project team and line-managed on a day-to-day basis by the project manager. In these instances, the successful integration of the PA appeared to hinge upon a recognition by other staff of the specialist skills and knowledge the PA brought to the team and the PA's

acceptance of the ethos and methods of mainstream youth work. Importantly, in these instances, pressures to achieve specified outcomes, as well as the anxieties generated by such pressures, were absorbed by the line manager working in liaison with the relevant Connexions manager. Effective working at agency and face-to-face levels was predicated upon the development of a shared perspective and good liaison between middle managers in Connexions and the projects.

The Connexions ethos

Some respondents recognise that both Connexions and the PA role are in a state of flux and feel that their experience and expertise in working with the 'hard to reach' can help them to influence the development of both.

> I've noticed with Connexions that it went from personal support, advice and guidance, to include personal development, which is even closer to youth work.

However, a major concern expressed by several respondents is that Connexions will take on the ethos of the Careers Service rather than the Youth Service. One respondent dismissed Connexions as:

> ... just the Careers Service with a purple and gold badge.

Several others questioned whether a genuine partnership with Connexions is feasible, expressing fears that a 'careers agenda' will predominate and undermine effective collaborative work.

> Partnership working with Connexions is not working because it is not a partnership of equals. Successful partnership work is based on mutual benefit, which is not how Connexions operates.

The anxieties about the domination of the Careers Service amongst street-based youth workers concern whether Connexions will be willing or able to develop the young person-centred approaches street-based youth workers believe to be a prerequisite of successfully engaging hard to reach young people. Respondents emphasised the time and effort involved in this endeavour and some were unsure that this reality had been fully grasped by other Connexions partners. Some drew on recent experience to highlight their unease about a clash between the formality of Connexions and the capacity of some young people to deal with it:

> The project can refer young people to PAs, but the system has changed little from referring a young person to see a careers officer. The PAs are still based centrally and accessible during office hours. Young people are expected to fix appointments and travel to the central office.

For their part, some ex-Careers Advisers are, understandably, hesitant about their new role, especially the requirement to work evenings, and weekends and to sometimes do this on the street, when they had previously operated indoors during normal office hours. However, some respondents acknowledged these varied approaches reflected pre-existing occupational cultures which might well change over time.

Another concern was that Connexions may have been oversold, and that the message that every young person is entitled to their own PA does not equate with the reality of resources on the ground. Many respondents commented on young people's lack of access to the advertised services;

> A manager within the organisation told us that PAs are inundated with referrals, and there is a waiting list to access them.

It is evident that the service is regarded with apprehension by many youth workers engaged in street-based youth work who fear that a Connexions 'takeover' would erode the ethos and bureaucratise the practise in ways which would threaten the viability of street-based youth work. On the other hand, this research has also discovered examples of highly effective work undertaken between street-based projects and Connexions PAs.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

Ewan was a member of a group of young people who were regularly hanging around the streets drinking and engaging in anti-social behaviour and were well known to the police. The group was originally approached by youth workers who informed them about a drop-in facility which was about to open. After this, the workers maintained fairly regular contact with Ewan and his friends via the drop-in and during their street-based sessions.

It emerged that Ewan was living with his widowed mother, with whom he had a stormy relationship, and was not attending school. He regularly came to the drop-in instead of going to school and eventually, with his consent, the youth worker made contact with the Educational Welfare Service. Despite efforts to return him to school, he would not go and the youth worker began to discuss with Ewan alternative educational provision, career choices and housing options. Meanwhile, work continued with Ewan's peer group, many of whom were involved in criminal activities. At 16, Ewan officially left school and also left home to live with a relative outside the area. Then he was arrested and detained overnight on a drunk and disorderly charge. Project workers helped him prepare what he was going to say to the magistrate and attended court with him. After this, Ewan began to break away from his peer group and to look for a job with the help of project staff. When his mother died, it was to the youth workers that he turned. Once again he was offered time and attention. Workers arranged for him to receive financial support for the funeral and supported him in caring for his younger brother. Nearly four years after the original contact, Ewan is employed full-time in a warehouse. He is now half way through a twenty-six week programme of introductory training for community and youth work and is considering applying to university to study for the professional qualification. He maintains his contact with the project and recently phoned the workers to invite them to have lunch with him.

Introduction

There has probably never been so much street-based youth work in England and Wales as there is at present. The findings of this research indicate a five-fold growth since the 1970s, while the relative youth of the 564 projects surveyed (over 50 per cent were less than three years old) suggests that much of this growth is recent. Moreover, the target of street-based youth work has shifted significantly in the last few years, from 'areas' to 'issues', a shift which is largely attributable to the youth initiatives emanating from central Government since 1997. The projects responding to the survey were working with 65,325 young people, or 2.25 young people per face-to-face staff hour, 81 per cent of them in the Connexions age range. This equates to approximately 1.2 per cent of 13 to19-year-olds in England. The education, training and employment needs of young people appear to be a high priority for street-based projects and we discovered examples of effective collaborative work with Connexions.

Most projects are dealing with a mixture of young people at high and medium risk or need. The study of the 76 young people to whom the social exclusion inventory was administered at two points revealed that, at their point of first contact with a project,

29 per cent were not in employment, training or education, 24 per cent received no income or benefits, 45 per cent had an offending history and 34 per cent were living in temporary or inadequate accommodation or sleeping rough. Only 25 per cent of these young people were in touch with another youth project or welfare agency. The researchers conclude from this that street-based youth work is reaching the high need/risk young people targeted by Connexions. Three months after the first point of contact with the street-based youth workers, the numbers of young people unemployed or not in education or training had fallen 8 percentage points to 21 per cent while those with no income had fallen from 24 per cent to 20 per cent. Poor school attendance, temporary exclusion or participation in unstable, casual, unskilled work fell by roughly one third. Anti-social behaviour was reduced by over 75 per cent and offending by a quarter. Regular attendance at structured youth activities rose by almost a third while the proportion banned from youth provision was reduced to zero. The numbers of young people referring themselves to welfare agencies over the period rose from 4 per cent to 15 per cent. Although, as we note in Chapter 4, we can only draw tentative conclusions from this data, it appears that street-based youth work with socially excluded young people does work, not always, not everywhere, but probably more effectively than any other method yet devised for reaching these socially excluded young people. However, if it is to work it is also evident that, in most cases, it must start 'where the young people are', be non-prescriptive and deal, initially at least, with the issues the young people believe to be important.

Issues arising from the study

1. The geographical distribution of provision

If street-based youth work is to maximise its potential for connecting hard to reach, socially excluded, young people with mainstream educational, training and employment services, attention must be paid to the uneven distribution of provision. As we note in Chapter 2, even taking into account the distorting effects of non-responses, street-based youth provision was distributed unevenly. Within the Connexions age group, the survey indicated that provision ranges from one street-based project per 3,030 young people in Devon and Cornwall to one per 55,642 in Northamptonshire. If the DfES 'Youth Standards' criteria, of a minimum of 80 per cent of young people being within 30 minutes journey time of youth provision, and the 25 per cent participation rate recommended by *Transforming Youth Work (DfES, 2002)* are to be achieved, the disparity in the provision of street-based youth work will need to be addressed.

The implications for policy and practice

Connexions Partnerships have undertaken mapping exercises to establish levels of need and provision in their areas. It is vital that this information and complementary data from other sources is employed to focus on the quantity of provision and the quality of the links between the projects and agencies providing services for young people. For example, it is necessary to ascertain whether referral and collaboration is happening 'on the ground' and if so,

where it operates, it identifies those not currently being reached. For their part, in areas where there is a paucity of street-based provision, Connexions Local Management Committees need to support its development.

2. The funding lottery

Current funding regimes aim to achieve the closest fit between policy objectives and practice outcomes. While it is undeniable that this has encouraged innovation, tightly targeted, time-limited funding has also had a destabilising effect upon many projects. Most of the projects surveyed are at the 'sharp end' of New Labour's flagship, anti-exclusion, youth justice and community safety strategies, yet at least half were struggling to stay afloat financially. In the eight to ten months between the first and second telephone interviews, three of the 31 projects had ceased doing street-based work as a result of funding and staffing problems, two were under threat and the research team was unable to re-establish contact with a further five, which may mean they have stopped operating.

Competition for funds between projects which are complementary, as well as competition between different regional branches of the same organisation appears to be leading to significant gaps in provision. Paradoxically, in certain places at certain times, projects face an opposite problem when funders approach them to bid for finance which has suddenly become available and has to be spent quickly. This problem is usually a product of the available finance outstripping the capacity of the relevant Government department, funding agency or multi-agency partnership to set-up an appropriate bidding process in time.

Smaller voluntary sector projects, and those run by local residents in response to local need are particularly vulnerable in this new environment. As a result, the realisation of bold policy goals and sophisticated inter-agency strategies are sometimes disrupted by the threatened or actual collapse of a street-based youth project.

The implications for policy and practice

Provision supported by the local authority Youth Service is, at present, insulated to some extent from the vagaries of this quasi-market in funding and this is reflected in the relative longevity of these projects. If an adequate spread of provision is to be maintained, it may be that local authorities should assume responsibility for supporting smaller, more fragile, locally-based projects. Ideally, this support would take the form of subsistence and contingency funding, and provision in kind in the form of expertise in tendering, monitoring and evaluation, and the production of reports.

Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Work addresses this problem to some extent through the proposed reform of the Education Formula Spending Mechanism. However, as only 22 per cent of street-based

projects receive all their funding from the local authority Youth Service, many projects in both the statutory and voluntary sectors will still be heavily reliant upon short-term funding. For their part, Connexions Partnerships currently operate on three-year contracts which limits their capacity to inject stability into this currently financially unstable field. This suggests the need for a longer-term funding strategy that offers the necessary continuity and support for both face-to-face work and non-contact activity. Our data suggests that street-based youth work constitutes an economical way of making contact and working effectively with socially excluded young people. Funding formulae, therefore, need to be realistic in terms of the numbers of young people who can be reasonably dealt with per worker and the intensity and duration of that work.

3. Staffing street-based youth work

At present, many strands of the ambitious, high-profile, policy programmes targeting socially excluded children and young people, itemised in Chapter 1, appear to be resting upon a remarkably insecure practice base. Uncertainties about funding have produced a high degree of transience within the workforce. In circumstances of financial uncertainty, smaller projects will often try to ensure cash-flow by avoiding long-term staffing commitments. Thus, three-quarters of project workers in the survey were either volunteers or part-time, sessional workers, while more experienced full-time workers were usually too busy with the burgeoning administrative workload to go out onto the streets with them. For their part, many part-time staff 'patch' together a portfolio of fractional posts to 'make ends meet'. This may offer unanticipated benefits to employers, but the workers seldom gain much from this arrangement and many move to full-time posts in other sectors at the earliest opportunity.

Transience in the workforce means there is scant opportunity to match the training, skills and experience of workers with the needs and risks presented by the young people. Although sessional staff and volunteers are usually offered some form of induction, opportunities for continuing professional development are rare. This is because project funding frequently covers only time spent in face-to-face work. Consequently relatively inexperienced and untrained workers can find themselves undertaking work with high need/risk young people. A further consequence of the absence of 'non-contact' time is that volunteers and sessional workers are often unable to pursue referrals to other agencies and are seldom able to accompany young people on initial visits, an activity which may be crucial to the success of the referral. More recently, releasing staff for Connexions PA training has imposed financial and personnel strains upon some projects.

Given these stresses, it is not surprising that staff recruitment and retention represent a major headache for projects. At present, street-based youth work appears to be a medium- or long-term career choice for very few people. Many workers use it as a short-term 'stepping-stone' to more lucrative public sector

employment or professional training. This serves to dissipate the 'practice wisdom' of street-based work and undermine continuity of contact with the hard to reach.

The implications for policy and practice

Project funding should reflect the reality that effective face-to-face practice is predicated on continuing professional development and the capacity of workers to make referrals to, and 'network' with, other professionals and agencies to achieve the best outcomes for those with whom they work. This echoes the proposal in *Resourcing Excellent Youth Work* that '… there needs to be a sustainable core service sufficiently resourced through the Education Formula Spending Mechanism' *(2002, p.15)*. However, while the *Transforming Youth Work* initiative begins to address the question of training, it does not really address the issue of staff retention. There is a pressing need for a clear career and pay structure for street-based youth work and opportunities for progression to full-time paid employment within the field. If, as we note above, part-time workers often survive on a portfolio of fractional posts it would appear that, in the new multi-agency world, it would be beneficial to all parties to transform this necessity into a virtue by consolidating these fractional posts into permanent 'inter-agency' posts.

Many street-based youth workers are on the lowest Joint Negotiating Council rates of pay and some, who are operating outside local authority structures, are earning even less than the JNC minimum, despite the fact they are rarely working under direct supervision and often carry both strategic and professional responsibilities. Greater correspondence between pay rates, qualification levels and the degree of responsibility carried by workers would help to promote staff retention.

4. The limits of prescription

This study suggests that when street-based work 'works', it does so because the young people who are the targets of the intervention allow it to. In almost all the projects surveyed or visited, the work is based upon the voluntary participation of young people and the negotiation of roles and goals between them and the workers. It is also the case that low, medium and high need/risk young people often associate together and in many instances low-need/risk youngsters may provide a way into work with their higher need/risk peers. Moreover, most young people do not appear to be amenable to single-issue interventions and most workers do not attempt them for that reason. This suggests that dialogue, and a willingness to begin with the issues and questions that have significance for the young person, may well be a necessary prerequisite of success, irrespective of whether street-based interventions have a primary concern with health, community safety, youth justice or education, training and employment.

At present there appears to be a mismatch between the specificity of many funding streams supporting street-based work and the complex realities of the

field in which it is undertaken. Ironically, it appears that *Transforming Youth Work* may be moving street-based youth work in the direction of an even more tightly focused approach, in advocating locally agreed targets for those categorised as 'NEET' and other problematic groups of young people.

The implications for policy and practice

The findings from the present research suggest the need for greater recognition amongst policy makers, funders and agency partners of the essentially generic, 'joined-up', nature of street-based youth work and the diverse timescales required for effective practice. A preparedness to accept greater fluidity and creativity at face-to-face level and a recognition that the street-work process does not readily lend itself to 'micro-management' via narrowly defined targets and outputs is important. Effective face-to-face work appears to require greater scope for discretion, negotiation and innovation, supported by the rationalisation of both funding streams and evaluation criteria. Allowing a plurality of outcomes and greater flexibility in their pursuit is likely to maximise the possibility of linking socially excluded young people into mainstream services and sustainable educational, training and vocational opportunities.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and inspection

Multiple funding streams require workers to collect an excess of monitoring and evaluation data and produce a steady stream of progress reports as they endeavour to meet the different, and sometimes contradictory, targets and 'outcomes' required by their funders. This leads some projects not to bid for small sums of money because the monitoring requirements are often just as onerous as those required for much larger sums. Several respondents indicated that excessive monitoring loads are taking staff off the streets and into their offices. Preparation for inspections, particularly if they are inspecting different aspects of projects and occur in quick succession, which is sometimes the case, can also draw staff away from face-to-face practice. Workers complain that some of the data collected has little relevance to street-work practice. Moreover, much of the data collected is fed 'upwards' to funders and is not routed back into the project where it could inform project development. There appears, therefore, to be an urgent need for modes of monitoring, evaluation and inspection that complement and promote good practice rather than detract from it.

The implications for policy and practice

It is possible that an expanded inspection role for Ofsted, along the lines advocated by *Transforming Youth Work*, as well as the pressure on local education authorities to maintain standards set by central Government, will create an overarching appraisal and evaluation framework for all youth work; one capable of offering the improved levels of accountability in which all

funders can have faith. Adoption of such a structure might relieve the pressure on projects, particularly the smaller ones, and those working in them. However, to be most effective, monitoring and evaluation needs to be developed in a dialogue between the funders, the project and the practitioner. Within this, the importance of qualitative as well as quantitative measures needs to be acknowledged. It is now fairly widely accepted that modes of evaluation which only measure inputs and outputs but tell us little or nothing about how and why change occurs are of little use to policy makers, funders, managers, practitioners or service users. Moreover, there is growing evidence that evaluation is most effective where service-users, managers and practitioners feel they have some ownership of the criteria and the evaluative process. This would suggest an evaluation strategy, variously described as 'theory building', 'action research', 'participative research' or 'realistic evaluation' *(Pawson and Tilley, 1997)*, in which the evaluators enter a continuing dialogue with service-users, programme partners, managers and practitioners, which is informed by previous research, data generated from the project and their own experiences of working within it. Such a strategy makes it possible to discover not just whether a particular intervention 'works', but how and why it works in a particular setting and whether, and if so how, its successes might be generalised to other settings. While it may not be practical to establish these types of evaluation regimes for all street-based youth work projects, the model is worthy of exploration since, more than most other forms of evaluation, it is a method that promotes both service development and the professional development of staff and managers.

6. Education, training and employment – working with Connexions

The present research suggests that street-based youth work is effectively targeting some of the most disadvantaged young people in the Connexions age range and making a significant impact upon their predicament and their motivation in the areas of education, training and employment. While welcoming the advent of Connexions as a potential resource, many street-based youth workers are apprehensive in the face of its apparent rigidity, the narrowness of its focus and its perceived emphasis upon the achievement of tightly demarcated outputs. This is not helped by the fact that many workers and projects remain unclear about what, precisely, Connexions is and what its existence will mean for them. Partly as a result of this, some workers fear a Connexions 'takeover', in which the ethos of developmental youth work will be abandoned in favour of a bureaucratised practice. The research team encountered many instances of resistance, poor communication, and hostility, sometimes rooted in a history of conflict between a project and its local Careers Service. However, on the ground, there were examples of highly effective collaboration. In these cases the Connexions managers and PAs appeared to have 'bought into' the 'developmental' ethos of street-based youth work and adopted a flexible approach to 'outputs'. It appears that Connexions and street-based project workers can work together effectively with young people to reach specified targets. However, it is also evident that, in the case of

harder-to-reach or more challenging young people, street-work interventions will need to be medium to long-term, open-ended and flexible, and all parties will sometimes have to be prepared for a long wait before quantifiable results become evident. If Connexions workers are able to communicate respect for, and an understanding of, the unique contribution of street-based youth work, and can be flexible and creative in their negotiations, progress will be made. However, for this to be accomplished, Government will need to be far clearer about its expectations of Connexions workers and the degree of flexibility it is prepared to grant them and local partnerships.

The implications for policy and practice

Joint training, including opportunities to spend time in each others' work settings, joint working and regular meetings could go some way to breaking down some street-based youth workers suspicions of Connexions in general and the erstwhile Careers Service in particular. Information about Connexions is often confusing, not least because centrally produced explanatory materials do not always reflect local arrangements. Street-based workers need to know about local arrangements in detail and how these vary between the different areas with which they may need to work. They need to know how referrals will work in practice and what will happen to the information they pass on. They need to know how and why Connexions money is allocated, who is contracted to deliver what, and whether, and if so how, they can procure Connexions money for undertaking relevant pieces of work. The distinctions between the different roles played by PAs remains unclear and workers need to know what a young person can realistically expect from a PA and what will happen if that PA already has a full caseload. Beyond this are questions about how Connexions and street-based projects will work together to ensure that other relevant services, Social Services, mainstream education and drugs agencies, for example, are sufficiently accessible to young people out of education, training and employment.

Greater clarity is also needed about what it is that distinguishes youth work and the Youth Service from the Connexions Service and the lines of demarcation between them. This would go a considerable way to allaying the fears of youth workers that their terms of reference are to be set in accordance with the Connexions agenda, and it would also give young people a better understanding of the nature of the 'contract' they were entering with these different types of workers and organisations. It would, moreover, serve to bolster the goodwill which is gradually developing between the two services.

7. On and off the street

Street-based youth work does not just occur on the street. Effective work with some ethnic minority young people will mean that projects will sometimes need to acquire premises in which they can meet and observe the necessary cultural and religious practices. Some work with some socially excluded young people,

particularly with those who are socially isolated like some groups of young women and youngsters with disabilities, will need to take place in their own homes. Other workers find they are most effective if they locate themselves inside, or in the vicinity of, schools and colleges. Effective work with those young people encountered on the street who are experiencing the most acute difficulties can usually only be effectively sustained if the worker has access to a building. Yet many projects, particularly the smaller local ones, can barely afford to pay salaries, let alone rent premises.

The implications for policy and practice

This may mean that multi-agency partnerships targeting hard-to-reach young people will need to make premises available to projects that presently have none. Partner agencies, unused to working with hard-to-reach and challenging young people, may be understandably apprehensive about this. Their apprehension will not be ameliorated by the fact that if street-based workers are required to manage and service these premises, this will take them off the street, and so the provider of the premises may also be asked to manage them. Yet, if the impact of street-based work is to be maximised, off-street facilities for sustained individual and small group work are essential.

8. The duration of intervention with high need/risk young people

Young people out of education, training and employment may need long-term intervention if they are to make a successful transition to adulthood, and this may go beyond the Connexions upper age limit. It will be important, therefore, that both funding and project goals take account of the fact that the duration of a successful intervention may be dictated by the time it takes for the young person to gain sufficient confidence and maturity rather than an arbitrary chronological cut-off point.

Street-based youth work, by its very nature, reaches a broad range of young people, including those who are simply getting on with life but enjoy an occasional chat with an approachable adult, and a small minority whose predicament is acute and occasionally life-threatening. The capacity of this latter group of young people to change their situation has often been eroded by brutalising childhood experiences, institutionalisation, long-term substance abuse and sometimes homelessness too. If they are to make a transition to something resembling independent adulthood they may need to stay involved with street-based youth workers well into their 20s and sometimes beyond *(SEU, 2000)*. Clearly, these young people do not fit readily into most youth policy initiatives and the age ranges of Connexions and the Youth Service, and they are also the people least likely to be picked up by adult services, few of which utilise street-based methods. Yet their needs are amongst the most pressing. This would suggest the need for considerable flexibility, backed by adequate resources, at the margins of the relevant services for young people, to ensure that they do not slip through the net.

The implications for policy and practice

It is possible that some of the proposals contained in *Transforming Youth Work* might inadvertently steer street-based youth work away from long-term work with the most problematic young people because of its emphasis upon accredited participation and the achievement of tightly specified targets and outcomes. This would suggest a revision of these targets and outcomes in the light of the issues and insights generated by the present research.

Beyond this, more effective liaison between street-based youth work and adult services in the areas of homelessness, addictions and mental health, backed by sufficient resources, would go a considerable way to plugging a significant and dangerous gap in existing provision.

Concluding comment

As this report indicates, street-based youth work offers one of the few ways of making and sustaining contact, and working effectively with, disaffected, socially excluded, young people; a social group which continues to cause concern to policy makers and practitioners in the fields of education, training, employment, health, housing, drugs, crime and disorder. However, as this report demonstrates, effective street-based youth work, which requires maximum ingenuity, flexibility and creativity, finds itself in tension with the time-limited funding regimes, audit culture and the outcome-led ethos which currently pervades the public services. It is ironic that the commendable efforts of policy makers to channel unparalleled resources towards work with socially excluded young people are sometimes subverted by the very mechanisms put in place to achieve this objective. It is not that street-based youth work wishes to be unaccountable, but rather that current modes of accountability are sometimes stifling the only service capable of 'delivering the goods' in this notoriously difficult area of social intervention.

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Appendix 1
Ten-point social exclusion inventory

	per cent of young people at each level	
	1st visit	**2nd visit**
Income:	38.2	40.8
0. Earning sufficient money to meet needs/adequately supported by parents/guardians		
1. Earning insufficient money to meet needs/inadequately supported by parents/guardians/in debt	14.5	14.5
2. Earning no money/in receipt of state benefits/gaining income from grey economy	11.8	18.4
3. Earning no money/not in receipt of state benefits	23.7	19.7
Information not provided	11.8	6.6
Housing:		
0. Permanent and adequate accommodation	61.8	68.4
1. Temporary or insecure accommodation	23.7	21.1
2. Hostel/Foyer or inadequate accommodation	3.9	3.9
3. Rough sleeper	6.6	1.3
Information not provided	3.9	5.3
Employment/education or training:		
0. Attending full-time education with no problems, or in full-time skilled job, or undertaking modern apprenticeship/NVQ	36.8	38.2
1. In education with support for learning or behavioural difficulties, or in full-time unskilled job or on pre-employment/Lifeskills training	14.5	26.3
2. Poor school attendance or pattern of temporary school exclusion or numerous casual unskilled jobs	18.4	11.8
3. Permanently excluded from school or unemployed/not engaged in education or training	28.9	21.1
Information not provided	1.3	2.6
Substance use/addictions:		
0. No use of alcohol or soft drugs/solvents	19.7	26
1. Moderate use of alcohol or soft drugs/solvents	55.3	57.9
2. Regular use, or apparent dependency upon, alcohol, soft drugs or solvents	18.4	15.8
3. Regular use, or apparent dependency upon, hard drugs	6.6	1.3
Information not provided	0.0	0.0
Family:		
0. Positive contact or involvement with family	25	30.3
1. Positive and negative contact or involvement with family	31.6	34.2
2. Conflictual relationship with family	25.0	27.6
3. Estranged from family/'looked after'/care leaver	11.8	2.6
Information not provided	6.6	5.3

	per cent of young people at each level	
	1st visit	**2nd visit**
Peers:		
0. Positive contact or involvement with mainly 'pro-social' peers	26.3	36.8
1. Little contact with peers	11.8	10.5
2. Positive contact or involvement with pro-social and anti-social peers	43.4	47.4
3. Core member of group involved in 'anti-social' activity	18.4	3.9
Information not provided	0.0	1.3
Membership of structured recreational youth activities other than the street-based youth work project:		
0. Regular attendance and actively participating	26.3	36.8
1. Irregular attendance/participation	17.1	31.6
2. Not attending provision	40.8	17.1
3. Banned from provision	2.6	0.0
No alternative provision OR Information not provided	13.2	14.5
Health:		
0. Good health	68.4	76.3
1. Poor health, treated by doctor/dentist	17.1	17.1
2. Untreated minor health problem	11.8	6.6
3. Untreated major health problem	1.3	0.0
Information not provided	1.3	0.0
Crime and offending:		
0. No known offences	50.0	61.8
1. Cautioned or fined in the past year	30.3	21.1
2. Is, or has been, subject of a community penalty in the past year	11.8	9.2
3. Has been discharged from a young offenders institution/secure unit in the past year	2.6	1.3
Information not provided	5.3	6.6
Welfare agency contact:		
0. No formal/informal contact with welfare agency	76.3	56.6
1. Self-referred to welfare agency	3.9	14.5
2. Under statutory supervision of welfare agency	10.5	10.5
3. Evading attempts of welfare agency to make contact	0.0	2.6
Information not provided	9.2	15.8